

# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

OF

POPULAR

LITERATURE, SCIENCE, AND ART

Fifth Series

ESTABLISHED BY WILLIAM AND ROBERT CHAMBERS, 1832

No. 726.—VOL. XIV. SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 1897.

PRICE 1½d.

## BLACKWOODS: THE HISTORY OF A PUBLISHING HOUSE.

THE early years of the present century witnessed a great and startling revival of literature, and they also witnessed a revolution in the trade concerned with the output and distribution of literary wares. The bookseller had previously been indistinguishable from the publisher, for the very good reason that he *was* the publisher. Every one knows the formula on the title-pages of last century: 'Printed by So-and-so for Messrs Brown, Paternoster Row; Jones, Poultry; Robinson, Fleet Street; M'Tavish, Edinburgh; O'Leary, Dublin,' and half-a-score of others besides. Few ventures were undertaken by solitary individuals. It was the booksellers of London as a body who persuaded Dr Johnson to undertake his most valuable and permanent work, *The Lives of the Poets*; and no doubt the system had the advantage of dividing what Mr Murray, the Emperor of the trade, always spells the 'risque.' Whether it was better than the system which succeeded it need not be inquired; for it may be assumed that each generation discovers and employs the machinery which suits it best. But if any one takes an interest in the transition from the old order to the new, he will derive ample material and assistance for studying it, to say nothing of extreme enjoyment in the process, from the recently published 'Annals' of the publishing house of Blackwood (*William Blackwood and his Sons*. By Mrs Oliphant. William Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh and London, 1897).

That the founder of the house was not born with a silver spoon in his mouth may safely be inferred from the fact that he was apprenticed to a firm of booksellers at the age of fourteen. But from the very outset of his career he seems to have imbibed the best traditions of the trade in Edinburgh, as represented by Creech and Smellie, and to have taken a keen interest in the contents of the books which it was his concern to buy and sell. Not, indeed, that he neglected the

practical side of his business; for by the time he was twenty-eight he was able to set up for himself, and in the following year (1805) to marry. He was among the lucky speculators in that lottery. Miss Steuart of Carfin, for that was her name, appears to have been a lady of great native shrewdness, and of a happy, if sometimes caustic, wit, which descended to her daughter, Miss Isabella, who has not yet been dead a twelvemonth. Mrs Blackwood doubtless objected—or pretended to object—to many harmless things, such as authors in general, or the civic banquets which her husband when he entered the Town Council felt bound as a matter of duty to attend. But she was an affectionate and devoted wife, for all she began her letters to her husband 'My dear Blackwood,' and ended them 'yours truly.' Such was the fashion of a reserved and undemonstrative age. It cannot be doubted that in his private life William Blackwood was eminently happy; and even Mrs Oliphant, who excelled in delineating the natural affections, never drew a domestic interior with greater sympathy and charm than that of the comfortable villa at Newington, where were growing up two daughters, and the seven sons for whom Mrs Blackwood had found it no light task to discover names.

Greatly, however, as Mr Blackwood prospered in his bookselling, and high as his reputation became for a thorough knowledge of his craft, he always aspired to something still higher. His prime ambition was to secure a great author with whom to make a great hit, and thus to approve himself worthy of the confidence which Murray had bestowed in appointing him his agent in 1811. If he envied Murray's superior financial resources it was because he saw that the London publisher had been able to make of his business 'a liberal profession.' It is curious to watch the play of these two instincts throughout the whole of his career, and indeed throughout that of his sons: the aptitude for business, and the enthusiastic appreciation of good writing. The cynic may scoff, and hint that the latter was never allowed

free scope when brought into competition with the former. But the cynic for once would be wrong. Even the most businesslike of his letters demonstrate how genuine was his attachment to considerations of a loftier order; and only those who consider that publishers (unlike all other men) exist to make a living not for themselves but for others could describe him as sordid or mercenary. The theory that what is to be aimed at is the mutual advantage of author and publisher permeates his correspondence.

Like most ambitious men he suffered disappointments; and one of them was exceptionally cruel. After considerable negotiation he had secured the *Tales of My Landlord* through the agency of James Ballantyne, and he reckoned it 'one of the proudest things in my life to have attained it.' But his triumph was short-lived. It is unnecessary to discuss the motives which prompted Scott to transfer the fifth edition to Constable in a most unceremonious manner; it is enough to say that William Blackwood was none too handsomely used in the matter. His hopes, thus dashed to the ground, were, however, revived with the revival of his *Magazine*, which was destined ere long to realise them. In the course of a long existence, the house of Blackwood has ushered into the world many works of sterling merit. But it was not the excellent and learned *McCrie's Life of John Knox*, nor even Miss Ferrier's witty and vivacious *Marriage*, which launched the publishing department of the firm on a career of prosperity; nor yet was it Alison's *History* which filled the sails with a propitious breeze, though at one time, as John Blackwood wrote to his brothers, twenty people a week seem to have said to themselves 'Let's have a set.' These functions were reserved for 'Maga.'

The first six months of the *Magazine's* existence could scarcely have been duller had the editors been secretly in Constable's pay. It was not till they had been got rid of, and a couple of young advocates called in, whom the publisher no doubt intended himself to supervise and keep in order, that the fun began. Nowadays, perhaps, a 'Chaldee Manuscript,' or anything in the least like it, would not be a very good 'send-off' for a periodical that hoped to see long life and many days. Amazingly clever as it is, and dexterously as it penetrates the weak points in everybody's armour, its personalities are appalling. We, too, have our share of personal journalism. Duchesses vie with dairymaids, and dukes with dustmen in confiding to a certain section of the press the most intimate particulars about their hearths and homes. But *hostile* personal journalism has almost ceased to exist, and one would have to grope in very unsavoury quarters indeed to find a periodical which attempted to throw ridicule on political or literary foes by twitting them with their physical infirmities or imperfections. Nor could any one in Lockhart's rank of life produce a second *Peter's Letters* without a practical certainty of forfeiting his position in society. Even in 1817, when the public was accustomed to incredible license and ferocity of attack, Henry Mackenzie, the 'Man of Feeling,' and Tytler the historian, were shocked by the 'Chaldee Manuscript.' But the storm blew over, though it was the precursor of many another; and Blackwood wrote to Murray that, on the

whole, he had gained more than he had lost by it. One step, indeed, he had taken which illustrates both the soundness of his strategy and the artfulness of his tactics. 'Get Scott,' implored Lockhart, 'and you get everything.' The Magician was ever ready to help a lame dog over a stile; and his neutrality, and even active, though indirect, alliance were secured by the bait of offering William Laidlaw an engagement to write regularly in the *Magazine* on country affairs.

It was not for a few years after the first great escapade that the celebrated series of the *Noctes Ambrosianæ* began, which long formed so admirable a medium for conveying to the public 'Maga's' 'criticism of life.' Their fame has rather obscured the unusual excellence which characterised much of the other contents of the *Magazine*, and which must have contributed materially to the very high position which it attained in the estimation not only of the literary world at large, but also of its very greatest men, like Coleridge, who, by-the-by, had been the victim of one of its earliest and least justifiable onslaughts. But, though no one reads the *Noctes* now—or almost no one—and though at this distance of time they stand much in need of the interpreter whom Mr Croker, sitting in the scorners' chair in London, professed to desiderate, a slight examination of their pages lends great support to the view that, by themselves, they might have won attention and success for any periodical. One may not always feel in tune with their exuberant hilarity and their boisterous humour; but one cannot read far without coming across something worth reading—some luminous piece of criticism wrapped up and concealed in a mighty sputter about trifles, some really amusing piece of whimsicality, some slight but vivid and invigorating sketch of outdoor life. It was never possible to distinguish the several hands which mixed the ingredients of the dish. Hogg unquestionably was one of the regular cooks, or at least kitchen-maids, to begin with; Maginn, that wild Irishman, catching up the tone and spirit of the publication with extraordinary versatility, often assisted in stirring the pot, and succeeded in landing Mr Blackwood in the Jury Court by means of a savage attack on Professor Leslie. Lockhart and Wilson, however, were the joint *chefs*, until Lockhart's regular contributions ceased in 1829, after which Wilson ruled the roast in solitary state. Other contributors sometimes attempted to don Christopher North's jacket, but they got little thanks for their pains. 'I had no wish,' writes the intensely vain, fundamentally kind-hearted, and temporarily crest-fallen author of *Ten Thousand a Year*, in answer to a remonstrance from the editor, 'I had no wish to force myself into your *caste*, so to speak; but I erred in the simplicity of my heart, fancying, erroneously it would seem, that I could make my communication the more acceptable. I sincerely beg pardon, and will never offend in like manner again.'

The ingredients themselves were of the most miscellaneous description. The great net of the *Noctes* was cast wide and embraced everything in its sweep. It was kept constantly supplied with tit-bits of political and literary gossip from London by journalists like Alaric Attila Watts (alarming name!), whose letters are still good

reading, as well as by Lockhart when he had taken up the reins of the *Quarterly*. Nothing came amiss which could sharpen a weapon against a foe or add a laurel to the wreath destined for the brow of a friend. The habit of personal attack was, unfortunately, maintained. That it was amusing enough at times is perfectly true. Its best excuse was the goodness of the cause; for, so far as anything of the sort can be summarised, it would be accurate to say that one great aim of Christopher's teaching was the extinction of literary cliques and coteries and the abolition of what we call log-rolling. But the poor publisher must have had a most unpleasant time of it. He alone had to put up with the disagreeable consequences of his contributors' extravagances. While they exhorted him from a safe distance to be bold, to fear nothing, and, above all, on no account to disclose their names, to him fell the unenviable duty of soothing wounded feelings, of pacifying vindictiveness, and sometimes of paying for his 'lads' whistle. At the outset, when the editorship was 'in commission,' as it were, the 'Spenslow and Jorkins' game was given a trial. The editor was played off against the publisher and the publisher against the editor. But, as time went on, the editorship came more and more exclusively into the hands of the publisher, who, as he assumed the entire responsibility, not unnaturally preferred to have the entire control. This system he bequeathed to his sons, Alexander, Robert, and John; it is continued by his grandson; and probably every contributor has experienced the stern and unbending, though calm and unostentatious, nature of that autocracy. Mrs Oliphant herself speaks of it in accents whose sincerity is beyond all question; and scarcely an author, great or small, crosses her stage without pausing to bewail the ruthless mauling of his articles, and the relentless excision of his most beautiful passages, his most telling episodes, or his most cogent arguments. Interpolation, it should be said, the editor has never practised. That would have added injury to insult.

The young gentleman of mythology who rashly attempted to drive the chariot of the sun can scarcely have had a more difficult team to manage than Mr Blackwood. His contributors seemed to learn nothing and to forget nothing. Lockhart, indeed, was sobered by the duel in which his friend Christie killed John Scott of the *London Magazine*. Nay, so deep was he plunged in despondency that Mr Blackwood had to make the most piteous appeals to him to resume his post. But Wilson was well-nigh incorrigible; and one is at a loss to conjecture what pert and malicious spirit sometimes obtained possession of his intellect. His most outrageous performance was probably an absolutely unprovoked attack on Wordsworth, whose cause he had always stoutly championed, but whom he now pronounced to be 'one of the illustrious obscure,' while the *Excursion* was set down as 'the worst poem of any character in the English language.' Wilson's offence is aggravated and rendered more mysterious by the fact that very shortly before its commission he, in company with Scott and Lockhart, had enjoyed the hospitality of the inspired Stamp-master. In the same number he made an equally wanton onslaught on an Irish gentleman of philanthropic, or rather philozaic, but quite

harmless tendencies. His remorse at the immediate prospect of his curses coming home to roost, though no doubt expressed in characteristically exaggerated language, is far from being an edifying spectacle. It will not, of course, surprise the reader to learn that Wilson was as sensitive to adverse criticism as he was eager to dispense it. Henry Mackenzie, having composed his differences with 'Old Ebony,' had sent in a review of Wilson's *Lights and Shadows*. Harken to the Professor: 'I consider old M. to be the greatest nuisance that ever infested any magazine. . . . The whole article is loathsome, and gives me and Mrs W. the utmost disgust. It is sickening to see it in the *Magazine*. It is not that I can possibly be such an ass as to dislike criticism. [No author, to be sure, ever was!] But this is mere drivelling falsehood and misrepresentation.' He was absurdly touchy, too, in personal matters; and at some supposed coldness in Mr Blackwood's demeanour would write a long screed of expostulation, and wind up by begging that there might be no more allusions to the matter.

Apart altogether from his explosions, Wilson must have been a most trying contributor, none the less so that 'Maga' could not possibly have done without him. He was one of those who never do to-day what can be put off till to-morrow. A distrust of the punctuality of all authors and contributors became deeply and permanently rooted in the bosom of the firm. Conceive an editor's feelings at receiving the following cool epistle from his right-hand man at the moment of going to press, when perhaps a couple of sheets had been reserved blank for the eagerly-expected 'copy': 'However painful to myself, and I fear also to you, I am obliged to give up the attempt to do a *Noctes*. I have tried as earnestly as I could, and I cannot. My mind has been incapable of doing what it was my most anxious wish to do; and that being the case truly, it must be put up with, and nothing said on the subject except a hope that it will be otherwise next month, and any heaviness of this number redeemed then.' By dint of pertinacity on the part of the publisher and the printers' devils, the manuscript was generally made forthcoming, and somehow the number appeared; but if one such note was sent from Gloucester Place to George Street, a hundred were. Yet he, too, had his fits of work, when Mr Blackwood's soul was overjoyed, and when he was hailed as the animating spirit of the *Magazine*. 'Oh Professor, you will stand by the boys!' was Mrs Blackwood's touching appeal when they first met after her husband's death in 1834; and he did so right gallantly. That two men of such totally different temperaments and tastes as John Wilson and John Gibson Lockhart should have worked together with all but perfect harmony is, perhaps, the highest possible testimony to the genius, in his own line, of William Blackwood.

Another well-known literary character and supporter of the *Magazine*, who in the matter of causing the publisher untold suspense and anxiety closely resembled the Professor, was that volatile being, Thomas de Quincey. Mr Blackwood early secured the promise of his assistance; indeed, it used jocularly to be said that the enterprising editor was in the habit of inviting every fresh person whose acquaintance he made to write for 'na Maga.' True to his

principle of getting the very best work out of every man, Mr Blackwood opens the correspondence with much encouragement and praise. 'I am so happy to receive anything from you,' he writes, 'that your two pages appear like the twenty-four of any one else; because, now that you are fairly begun, I feel confident that you will do justice to yourself. It was the knowing what you *could* do if you were once *resolved* to do, which made my repeated disappointments so mortifying to me. This is now all happily over; because, as the French say, the first step is the grand affair.' But soon the note changes into, 'I must tell you frankly at once that your mode of furnishing articles will neither answer your own purpose nor mine. For instance, this article which you have not yet finished, you positively promised to have with me complete on Tuesday by two o'clock;' and so forth. De Quincey in reply 'chaffed' the publisher, told him that his last number had been a dreary collection of dullness, and foresaw that the entire weight of supporting the *Magazine* must rest on his shoulders. Back came the prompt and withering retort: 'When I apply to you to be the Atlas of my *Magazine*, it will be time enough for you to undertake the burthen. And in the meantime I must beg leave to say that if you cannot send me anything better than the "English Lakes," it will be quite unnecessary for you to give yourself any further trouble about the *Magazine*.' Unfortunate De Quincey! So lavish in promises of amendment; so punctilious in inquiring the very latest moment up to which his articles could be received; so fertile in excuses for invariably being a good deal later! There he stands, revealed in his own letters; and it may here be remarked that the work is peculiarly rich in interesting correspondence of all sorts. There are young John Blackwood's gossip letters from the branch in Pall Mall; there are letters from innumerable literary men, of which Maginn's perhaps are the most (consciously) entertaining; there are William Blackwood's letters to his son—William the second, a cadet in India—letters such as few sons are fortunate enough to receive from a father; and there are the letters of Lockhart, which Mr Lang had not the advantage of perusing when he wrote his *Life* of that great writer and good man.

For good he may now be emphatically pronounced as well as great, even by those who have hitherto been sceptical. These volumes show him in the most favourable light. William Blackwood had been the benefactor of his youth, and Lockhart remembered it to the end. With the possible exception of the period of depression to which we have referred, he always shared to the full the curious feeling of almost chivalrous devotion which 'Maga' alone perhaps among all periodicals has inspired in her contributors; and so far from breaking off the connection when he moved to London, he continued to send supplies of material for use in the *Noctes*—nay, from time to time wrote a whole *Noctes* himself. He, too, when William Blackwood died, rallied to the aid of 'the boys,' and his kindness to John in London was past telling. 'I never saw him more cordial and amusing,' writes John Blackwood on one occasion; 'he has abandoned his old practice of giving one two fingers to shake.' The little trait

was doubtless significant of much. To the day of his death, no incident occurred to mar the harmony of a relationship which had subsisted for close on forty years, and which was eminently honourable to both sides.

Little or nothing has been said of Hogg, or Coleridge, or Warren, or Lytton, or Hamley, or Aytoun, or George Eliot, or a hundred other celebrities, great and small, who play their part in Mrs Oliphant's pages. It must not be supposed that the interest evaporates with William Blackwood's death. On the contrary, nothing could be more engrossing than the picture of the sons carrying on the traditions of their father, as other sons have done, and enlisting new recruits for the *Magazine* of which he had been so proud. Nor could anything be more charming than Mrs Oliphant's account—given with true modesty and tact—of her own early connection with the house. The whereabouts of these and of many other points will be found in the copious index. But the book is essentially as much for reading through as for consulting. 'It must indeed be a great treat to you,' was Mr Blackwood's favourite phrase about 'Maga' in writing to his son, the Major, in India. It will be surprising if this chronicle of the firm he founded does not prove 'a great treat' to many readers.

## A NIGHT IN AUSTIN FRIARS.

### CHAPTER IV.—CONCLUSION.

SOME days went by. Shuttleworth had started off post-haste for Cairo; and no tidings of him or of Gilbert Ringham had since reached Charterhouse Square of which Helen had been made acquainted. It might be, the girl repeatedly thought, that her father knew more about the purloining of the foreign bonds than he was ready to admit. Her father and Ralph Shuttleworth had sat late into the night debating. There had been no apparent inclination to include her in their conference, and her pride deterred her from exhibiting a sign of the almost overpowering curiosity which the situation had roused. It was clear that neither her father nor Shuttleworth shared Mr Grinold's belief that she had a head for affairs. She was deeply pained. Not because she had been ignored; Helen Warrenner was not sensitive on that score; she could afford to laugh at their narrow-minded attitude; but what troubled her—had troubled her ever since Shuttleworth had left London—was the dread lest Ringham should be too hastily judged. She had felt more drawn towards him than she would have willingly confessed. An intuitive sense of trust in him had been awakened. The report that he had absconded had naturally perplexed her, but it had not shaken her confidence in the man. He had occupied her thoughts almost unceasingly ever since.

She had crossed over into the garden one afternoon. She wished to think—away from her father, whose despondency about the lost fortune deeply oppressed her—think in peace and quietness for a brief half-hour. She walked to and fro under the limes, pondering the situation for the hundredth time. The trees were nearly bared of their foliage now; the dead leaves were chasing each other along the pathway and dancing pirouettes about her when an occasional gust of wind swept



round the square. Of a sudden Helen became aware of a tall, broad-shouldered man in a fur coat standing at the gate.

'Mr Ringham!' She stepped a few paces from the railings and stared at him with unfeigned surprise. 'You—you in London!'

'May I come in? I must speak with you at once. You can spare me a moment?'

She unhesitatingly opened the gate; and for a while they walked to and fro in silence. Glancing up furtively into his face, she noticed an anxious, tired look; and she began to fear lest he had come to appeal to her—even to plead her intercession for mercy. But she felt reassured by the first words he spoke.

'I have returned to London—I have travelled night and day,' he said, 'to ask you one question. Your answer is of the most vital importance to me.'

'What is it?'

'I've been told, Miss Warrener, that Mr Shuttleworth and your father have utterly condemned my explanation,' said Ringham, 'about the robbery of the foreign bonds. They regard it as a trumped-up, ridiculous story. My question is simply this: do you share their opinion?'

Helen looked bewilderingly at Ringham. 'I've not been given the chance. I was led to believe that—that you had absconded,' she said; 'had carried off the bonds. I knew nothing. I've been kept in ignorance of the whole affair.'

'As I thought,' and Ringham took an oblong envelope from his pocket. 'Will you read this? It's a copy of the letter which I despatched to Cairo on the morning upon which the calamity happened. I left a duplicate of this at the "Two Swans," in a sealed packet addressed to Mr Shuttleworth, before quitting the hotel.'

Helen took the letter. She was about to read it, when a thought came into her head, and she looked up. 'Why did you quit the hotel so suddenly?'

'I waited until the last moment,' said he. 'I had hardly time left to catch the mail-train.'

'To Cairo?'

'Yes. I determined to return,' said Ringham, 'and put myself in the hands of my directors. I was so worried and perplexed, Miss Warrener, that I could not rest in London. In a moment of desperation—I can't tell you what mental agony I suffered—it did enter into my head to take to flight. My instant return to Cairo seemed my only safeguard. I left the matter in Mr Shuttleworth's hands, as Mr Grinold's lawyer, and I looked for fair-play at least.'

She now hastened to read the letter. Ringham had lucidly set forth how he had come to be locked in the house in Austin Friars; how he had found a lodging in a room on the top floor; and how, upon waking at daybreak, the bundle of foreign bonds had disappeared. There was an intensely concentrated look upon her face while she read.

She folded the letter presently, and stood for some moments in deep abstraction. 'About what hour,' she said, glancing at last into Ringham's face—'about what hour did you reach Austin Friars?'

'Shortly after six o'clock.'

'After six? Then it was I who locked you in!'

'Yes. I saw you from the staircase window,' he said—'saw you standing under the lamp. But—but—'

'Mr Ringham,' Helen suddenly interposed, 'I think that I've got a clue.'

'A clue to this mystery?'

'Yes! Wait for me only five minutes;' and she hastened towards the gate. 'I'll not be longer.'

In a little parlour, known to Helen as 'father's study' ever since she was a child, John Warrener sat brooding over the fire. He had ceased to take things in a hopeful light. His cheery manner was gone. He was dressed in an ill-fitting suit of black, which increased his appearance of gloom. His face had already lost some of its roundness, and the wrinkles had deepened about his forehead and at the corners of his eyes. He had stood beside Anthony Grinold's grave as sole mourner a few days since; and then he had returned home to wonder what would become of himself—how it would now be possible to keep a roof over their heads; and this problem had been haunting his thoughts incessantly ever since.

'Father, where have you put the keys?'

Warrener looked round startled. He had not heard his daughter come in. 'What is it? What keys?'

'Mr Grinold's keys—the keys of Austin Friars. Please give them to me at once.'

Warrener shook his head with emphasis. 'I promised Shuttleworth not to let them out of my hands.'

Helen's eyes flashed angrily. 'Do you mistrust me?'

'No; but Shuttleworth!—'

'Don't try my patience, father! You must know,' said the girl, 'that I shouldn't ask for the keys unless I had a strong motive.'

'What is it?'

'I can't stop to discuss that now,' was Helen's reply. 'You should have taken me into your confidence—you and Mr Shuttleworth—before he went off to Cairo. I might, perhaps, have saved him the journey.'

'What do you mean?'

'I've learnt everything about Mr Ringham's flight, as you called it. I've read the letter which he wrote to the bank explaining how he had been robbed'—

'Ah, come now!' Warrener ejaculated. 'Was ever a more ridiculous letter written than that?'

'There's nothing ridiculous about it.'

'What?'

'I believe in Mr Ringham,' Helen insisted undauntedly.

Warrener looked up. 'Shuttleworth was right. He said you'd side with the man. And now you can understand why we didn't confide in you. But how came the letter to get into *your* hands?'

'Give me the keys. I may tell you then.'

Warrener slowly rose from his chair. Something in Helen's look and manner had at last impelled him to yield. He crossed to his desk, unlocked the drawer, and took out a heavy bunch of keys.

'Now'—and he placed them reluctantly in her hand—'who showed that letter to you?'

'Mr Ringham. He has returned to London,' said Helen. 'I left him only a minute ago.'

'Where—where is he?'

His hand was on the door; but his daughter stopped him, and said in a tone of irresistible appeal: 'Father, Mr Grinold trusted me; can't you?'

When Helen rejoined him, Ringham observed that her cheeks were flushed and her eyes glistened with suppressed excitement. Each time he had looked into her face she appeared to him more beautiful.

'Now, Mr Ringham, will you come with me?'

They walked for a while in silence, threading their way through narrow streets and winding alleys.

'Where are you taking me, Miss Warrener?'

'Didn't I tell you? To Mr Grinold's house.'

'Where is that?'

'In Austin Friars,' said Helen.

'Austin Friars?'

They came abruptly upon the old square, Ringham's eye at once sought the mansion with the twin-doors and double flight of steps under the shell-shaped canopy. The doors were closed, and upon most of the windows of both houses he read the words 'To Let'—'To Let,' in fresh white paint. Helen led the way up the steps, and unfashioned a padlocked door on the left-hand side—the door upon which there was no name or number.

'Is it possible?' said Ringham, in blank surprise. 'Did Mr Grinold live here?'

'Yes, all his life,' said Helen; 'and his father and grandfather before him.'

'If I had only known!'

Helen stepped into the hall, and Ringham followed. He looked curiously about him. This hall and the staircase resembled the hall and staircase in the other house in every detail. Helen, interpreting his look, remarked:

'About a hundred years ago this house and the house next door formed one big mansion. It was split into two, as you see it, by Mr Grinold's father. His object, I believe, was to sell this portion. The idea was conceived at a moment of financial embarrassment; but the firm of Grinold struggled successfully out of its plight, as many a firm has done before, and the idea was abandoned. Will you come upstairs?'

When they reached the first-floor landing Helen unlocked a door, and they found themselves in a large and lofty room with three great windows looking out upon Austin Friars. The room was a library, and the massive oaken furniture matched well with the dark panelled walls. Helen drew back the heavy folds of curtain from one of the windows, and the deepening twilight looked in upon them.

'Before going a step farther,' said Helen, with her hand upon a high-backed arm-chair, 'let me tell you what gave me the impulse to bring you here. The truth is, your letter has put a strange notion into my head, and I want to hear what you think of it. It may seem ludicrous to you, and perhaps it may prove so. We shall see.'

Ringham, who had commenced to pace restlessly up and down the room, stopped and looked eagerly towards her.

'What will you think of me, Mr Ringham,' she said, 'if I venture to suggest that the man who took from your valise those foreign bonds was none other than Anthony Grinold himself?'

He stood speechless, too amazed to comment upon her bold surmise.

'Would you credit it?' she went on. 'Can you conceive how such a thing could come about?'

No? And yet to me it seems almost as plain as though I had been an eye-witness to it. I knew Mr Grinold's character so well. I am going to surprise you. Until the night upon which he woke me out of my sleep in the top room with the cobwebbed doors he was a wretched hoarder of gold. My unlooked-for presence there—my discovery of his secret—seemed to change the man's very nature. I'll not attempt to explain the fact. He had a distinct personality, a will-power that was never surpassed. He received me in this very room a day or two later—greeted me as though we had been friends for years. It was a memorable meeting. He related many interesting things about the old house of Grinold, gave me my first lesson in finance, and incidentally mentioned that all his money was lying idle at the bank. His meaning was only too clear to me. He wished me to understand that a ruling passion had been conquered, and the subject was never again hinted at between us as long as he lived.'

Ringham listened as if spell-bound. By her beautiful presence, her admirable wit and sympathy, she had directed Anthony Grinold's avaricious thoughts into a healthier channel. A human interest had sprung up to inspire and sustain a nobler impulse. It was with breathless suspense that he waited to learn more from her of this strange being; for his imagination was already whirling him a dozen different ways in search of a solution of the mystery that Helen Warrener was slowly unfolding before his mind's eye.

'You can now understand, perhaps,' she said, 'what mental torture Mr Grinold must have suffered at times. He was like a confirmed drunkard who has resolutely turned his face against drink. It often pained me to look at him. He seemed to be wrestling with some unseen force. He never knew how intently I observed him—never knew how much I pitied his weakness and wondered at his strength. He thought me deeply absorbed at such moments in his financial schemes. And so the day came round—that unlucky day of the fog—upon which he looked for you. That was the most terrible day of all—a day of real torment, I almost think. But you will presently be able to judge for yourself and draw your own conclusions.'

The twilight was fading fast from this sombre room; some parts of it lay already in deep shadow, and the pictures on the walls had become almost blotted out. And now Ringham perceived that a low arm-chair that stood beside the fireless hearth—upon which Helen frequently bent her eyes while speaking—must be the chair in which the financier had habitually sat. It wrought so strong an impress on his mind that he conjured up a scene in which the old man and this young girl were seated together, upon that foggy day, waiting the delivery of the foreign bonds.

'That night after I left him, as it seems to me,' Helen went on, 'he sought the old garret. It was there that he counted his heap of gold in the days gone by. Is it not probable that in a clouded moment, through force of habit, he was possessed by the thought that his wealth was there? Creeping stealthily into that room in the dead of night, screening his hand-lamp with his trembling hand, the light could not fail to fall upon your valise. Why should he wake you? why run the risk of your opposition? The bonds

were what he desired. The ruling passion overmastered him—his greed for gold. And then—and then'—

She had moved towards the mantelpiece, and had taken from it a small silver lamp while still speaking. She now paused and looked round.

'And then?' said Ringham eagerly.

'He took the bonds,' she said, 'and went stealthily out.'

'But you haven't told me,' urged Ringham—'how he got in.'

'You shall see.'

She lighted the lamp, and then beckoning to him to follow her, Helen led the way upstairs.

When they reached the top flight she handed him the lamp, and selecting a key from the bunch which she carried, Helen unlocked a door, and upon entering the room Ringham was instantly struck with the marked similarity in its shape, as well as in its window and doors, to the garret in which he had found shelter upon that memorable night in the other house.

'This was Mr Grinold's bedroom,' said Helen, seeing Ringham raise the lamp to glance about him—'the room he occupied nearly all his life—the room in which he died.'

It was scantily furnished: a little wooden bedstead in one corner, a deal table under the window, a rickety-looking chair; but Ringham's eye was principally attracted towards two cupboard doors, one on each side of the fireplace. They reminded him of the cupboards with the cobwebbed locks.

'Let us look inside,' said the girl anticipatively. 'Shall we?' Without waiting for a reply, she unlocked the cupboard nearest the door. A great iron safe filled up the space within.

'That's where Mr Grinold kept his gold—before I knew him—in the old miserly days! No one knows where the key to this safe is to be found; not even Mr Shuttleworth—no one, except myself.'

Leaving the cupboard unlocked, Helen turned to the other cupboard, and Ringham observed that she selected a different key for opening the door. This cupboard contained three empty shelves. She drew out these shelves; something now glittered upon the panelling which the woodwork of the middle shelf had concealed. It was a long steel bolt. Helen pulled back this bolt, gave the panelling a push with her hand, and a large door swung noiselessly open. She stepped forward, beckoning to Ringham over her shoulder to follow with the lamp. He hastened to obey, and next moment he found himself standing in the garret in which he had been robbed. The door had closed behind them with a dull thud.

'It's a very simple matter,' said Helen, 'when you know the secret; isn't it? This cobwebbed door, as you see, opens with its entire framework into Mr Grinold's bedroom when the bolt is unfastened. And who could have unfastened it on the night upon which he died but he?'

Ringham readily acquiesced. 'But,' he said—'but where are the bonds?'

'We shall find them,' she predicted, 'in the safe.'

Her prediction proved correct. Having discovered the safe-keys in a secret drawer in the old bureau, the safe-door was quickly opened. The bundle of foreign bonds lay snugly tied up in a deep recess. As Helen drew them forth a

letter addressed to 'Mr Gilbert Ringham' dropped upon the floor. It contained a business document signed by Anthony Grinold, acknowledging his receipt of the bonds from Cairo, dated upon the foggy day on which the courier had reached Austin Friars.

'Miss Warrenner,' said Ringham fervently, 'I wish I could express my gratitude! But is that possible? I cannot find words.'

She was stooping to replace the bonds, and, possibly from the exertion of bending down, the colour suddenly mounted to her cheeks. Presently she looked up. 'There's nothing to thank me for. I'm so glad to think that he held them in his hands after all,' said Helen, 'before he died.'

Ringham was a welcome guest that evening at Charterhouse Square; and it was unanimously agreed that he should remain in London until Shuttleworth's return. One day—the day upon which the lawyer's arrival from Cairo was hourly expected—Ringham had stepped over with Helen to the old house in Austin Friars to restore some books which they had borrowed from the shelves of Mr Grinold's library. While descending the stairs the lamp-lighter lighted the old lamp at the entrance, and Ringham stopped at the window and looked down.

'It was there that I first saw you—do you remember?—on the foggy night upon which you locked me in.'

'Haven't you forgiven me yet?'

'Forgiven you? Helen, I have loved you ever since;' and he held out his hands to her in appeal. 'Can you ever care for me?'

She gave him her hand, and they went lingeringly out into the twilight of Austin Friars.

## A MOUNTAIN OF ALUM.

By E. H. PARKER.

It is a very open question whether any of the readers of *Chambers's Journal* have ever heard of an alum-mine. Alum is obtained in England by subjecting alum-shale (coal, iron pyrites, and alumina) to the prolonged action of fire: sulphate of alumina is dissolved out of this by the admixture of water, and the addition of sulphate of potash or sulphate of ammonia then produces alum, of which 30,000 tons are manufactured in England every year. But when I was stationed at the port of Wënchow, in the Chinese maritime province of Chéh Kiang, I heard vague stories of a genuine solid mountain of alum in the neighbourhood, and I resolved to go and see it. I travelled south from Wënchow along a canal to the city of Jui-an, or Shui-an, and thence, crossing the Fei-lung or 'Flying Dragon' River, passed the salt-flats to my left, took a canal-boat to Ping-yang city, and beyond that as far as a place called Ts'ien-ts'ang, half-way up a short tidal river. Here I changed boats, sailed up with the tide, and in four hours more arrived at a place called Liu-shih, or 'Willow Stone,' whence I walked fourteen miles through lovely mountain scenery to the Fan Shan, or 'Alum Mountain' (lat. 27° 20', long. 120° 30'). So far as I could ascertain by industrious local inquiry, only one white man had ever visited these mines before, and he appears to have been the missionary Gutzlaff, who

fifty years ago used to wander alone round the coasts of China and Siam.

The presence of alum in the neighbourhood was forcibly brought to my notice in rather a disagreeable way. Whenever I reached an inn or resting-place in China, my servants were trained to bring me certain creature comforts in fixed order before any chaffering or arguing began. The first of these luxuries was always a shallow wooden pail of cold water and the 'hotel rag,' a sort of dishcloth dipped in hot water, with which all visitors swab down their faces. I used to plunge my face, eyes open, in this water in order to get the dust out of the corners. But on this occasion, no sooner had I put my face in than I felt as if my eyes and lips were being covered with sticking-plaster. Of course this was the alum, and I had omitted to reflect that all the local water must naturally be strongly impregnated with it. As a matter of fact, all water used for cooking and tea-drinking at this village has to be carried thither by coolies in buckets from a considerable distance. However, no permanent damage was done, and I at once set to work to cross-examine the villagers previous to visiting the mines myself.

I was informed that most of the alum was taken to a port called Ch'ih K'i, or 'Red Brook,' lying ten miles to the east of the Alum Mountain; thence it was carried by junk to Ku Ngao-t'ou, or 'Ancient Turtle Head,' the centre of the Ningpo alum-market, lying at the mouth of the tidal river above mentioned. At one time the alum was all taken to Liu Shih, and thence down the river, but it has since been found better to convey it by sea, probably because customs and *likin* interference has less hold upon it this way. The total annual export to Ningpo was stated to be 200,000 peculs, or say 12,000 tons; and the export tariff is fixed by treaty at '0045 of a tael for each peul, or at the present low rate of silver exchange, three halfpence a hundredweight.

About two centuries ago the Chinese Emperor detected his heir in the act of corresponding with outsiders secretly by means of alum-water, as a sort of 'invisible ink,' or sympathetic ink. No such process appears to be known in Europe; but doubtless the incombustibility of alum in some way allows heat to be applied to the paper, and thus to bring out hidden writing.

Alum is extensively used all over China for clarifying water, and I have never once failed to secure a piece at the shortest notice, even in the remotest villages, when, as often happened, I needed a throat gargle.

Early the next morning I went to inspect the mountain, which is an isolated mass, perhaps ten miles round at the base, and at its highest point standing 1000 or 1200 feet above the level of the plain. All the people said it was one solid mass of alum; and indeed they were not far wrong, for it appeared to have been honeycombed, tunnelled, and torn up in every direction by countless generations of men. Where any section of virgin soil was visible, it looked like a half-disintegrated mixture of common earth, yellow sandstone, and grit-rock, with here and there large blocks of alum-stone strewn about it in the proportion of raisins and currants to the solid part of a plum-pudding. There is no science or mystery about it: all that is necessary is to pick

the stones out and carry them away to the kilns for further treatment. These kilns are covered in as a protection from the elements, and the blocks of alum are stowed away inside in the form of two loose walls, between which smoulders a very gentle furnace of brushwood. The Chinese labourers have a very ingenious as well as a simple machine for lessening the labour of stowage. A long pole like a battering-ram is suspended outside the door of the kiln in such a way that it can be made to swing up inside; blocks of alum are poised on the inner end, and three men by a clever thrust and twist so manipulate the pole that the blocks are carried up to the top level of the wall, and are then just tipped over to the right or left, so as to rest on and further heighten the wall. The stones now remain, very much as in a lime-kiln, until they are softened by the heat, after which they are placed in large wooden vats sunk into the ground, and there slaked with water for a few minutes only.

The next step is to take them out of the vats and scatter them over shallow pits, where they are broken with clubs into small fragments. Hard by is another set of vats, into which these pieces are thrown to soak in water for the space of three days and three nights. After undergoing this process the liquid mixture has almost exactly the appearance of quicklime. It is shovelled into an enormous mud boiler, so arranged with flues at the rear of the kiln as to derive its heat from the same furnace that softens the blocks of alum-stone. These mud boilers are in principle very like those which the Chinese use in Siam and the Malay peninsula for the purpose of extracting pure tin from the ore. Nothing could be cheaper or more economical. The bottom of the mud boiler, or rather the extreme apex of the bottom, consists of a tiny iron pan, which withstands the brunt of the action of the fire, and serves as a firm base for the cylindrical mud walls. But half-way up the boiler runs another fire like a winding flue, so that the heat is evenly distributed all over the inside. After being boiled into a treacly soup, the liquid is ladled out into pits of stone which are sunk into the ground, and is then allowed to cool.

As with the salt (described in the September part of *Chambers's Journal* for 1896) the pure alum crystallises to a thickness of about six inches, and forms a lining to the pits, having the appearance of dip tallow or horizontal stalactites of soap. When the alum has quite cooled a saw is applied, and the beautiful clear alum, in blocks of two sizes, a hundredweight and half a hundredweight, is carried off by coolies to the shipping port of Ch'ih-K'i. When I was there the men told me that twenty-four boiling-houses, all of the same size and capacity, were in full working order, and that none of them turned out more than 10,000 peculs a year—say 600 tons. The usual result of a day's work was from 20 to 40 peculs a day, according to season and circumstances. There are about 2500 labourers employed in boiling, and twice that number of coolies to carry the mineral away. At least half these carriers are women of non-Chinese extraction, called *Zika*—a race of semi-savages who may be described as a kind of Chinese gypsies.

A considerable amount of gypsum is also picked up among the rocks of the coast. It requires no treatment beyond washing.



## TREASURE-SEEKING IN FRANCE AT THE PRESENT DAY.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART II.

THE latest organised attempt at discovery of the great legendary treasures belonging to unquestionable tradition is surrounded by circumstances of the most romantic interest. It was during the summer of 18— that the young Marquis of Rouvière, attaché to the French Embassy in England, was seated all alone in his room on the second floor of the French Ambassador's residence in Hanover Square, looking out of the window over the dreary open space, and contrasting the dullness of life on Sunday morning in London and the gaiety of Paris at that same hour. He was aroused from his fit of the blues by a gentle tap on the door, and, turning, beheld standing before him a long, gaunt individual, with small, red-rimmed, twinkling eyes, snuffy nose, unshaven beard, and other signs held to betray the possession of little soap but of great science—in short, a tall, raw-boned, gray-haired savant, with a bundle of papers under one arm, and under the other an umbrella, which neither persuasion nor violence on the part of the horrified English footman had induced him to relinquish at the bottom of the stairs. Without even waiting for the stranger to speak, the Count reminded him in a snappish tone that, the day being Sunday, no business was possible, and that it was hard indeed that the poor, overworked, under-paid attachés of embassies could not even have their miserable Sundays at their own disposal, &c. To this the poor, timid savant listened with shrinking deference; until at last, becoming aware that the stranger was repeating over and over again that the business on which he came to speak was of a strictly private nature, and concerned indeed the future fortune and welfare of the Count himself, the diplomat suddenly began to listen. The savant, after opening the door to see that there were no listeners on the landing, drew his chair close up to the table and extracted from his pocketbook a paper which he presented as his introduction. It was signed by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, requesting aid and protection from every French Ambassador and Consul throughout the world for the bearer, who was occupied in antiquarian research in England. The Count began at last to think the visitor worthy of attention, and sat down with the air of a martyr. But before long the interest had grown so absorbing, so exciting, so spirit-stirring, that Monsieur de Rouvière felt himself spell-bound as he listened.

The personal history of the stranger was soon told. He had been despatched to London from Paris by a brother-savant gifted with less learning but greater pecuniary means, to make some important researches in English history for the great work upon which he was then engaged, and which, completed by the researches thus made, has become a most celebrated historical work. For this purpose permission had been obtained to examine certain chests of documents preserved in the Tower of London. The antiquary had been engaged in this pursuit in vaults and

lumber-rooms amid dust and cobwebs for seven long, weary months, and had been fortunate enough to rescue many a secret of the utmost importance from the oblivion of mankind and the rats of the Tower. His work was well-nigh completed when he discovered at the bottom of one of the chests a small copper casket of oblong shape. The box was neither curious nor valuable—a mere case of thick copper such as the French shopkeepers of the last century used for depositing their daily takings, long and shallow, with a disproportionate handle and a long, flat-headed key. But this key was tied to the handle by a strong cord, and enclosed in a parchment envelope covered with official-looking heraldic seals, many of which the savant recognised on the instant as belonging to the most illustrious houses of ancient France. There were lions and griffins couchant and rampant, there were mermaids and porcupines, nay, there was that well-known one, not the least glorious, the hog with a tuft of palm-leaves growing from his snout and showing a broken tusk. But more curious than all this was the fact that the signature of each *preux* was affixed beneath his coat-of-arms, evidently all signed at the same time and with the same pen. The box evidently contained some deposit to which all of these signatures bore testimony. After it had been thus sealed and secured in the presence of the witnesses—fourteen in number—it was obviously intended that it should not be opened save when each signatory being present could redeem his own signature, and break his own seal.

The visitor at this point of his recital plunged his long thin claw into his left pocket, and drew thence the object of which he had been speaking. With a look of learned satisfaction, he handed the box across the table to M. de Rouvière, pointing to the arms of his own house and the signature of his grandfather, guillotined in '93. The young attaché now began to be impressed with a very different feeling towards the whole affair to that which he had experienced before. His hand, which had hitherto lain listless at the elbow of his chair, was suddenly stretched forth to clutch the box thus tendered towards him, the lid of which was unlocked.

Monsieur de Rouvière slid the chair nearer to his visitor, and leaned with both his elbows on the table in an attitude of eager interest. The savant was an artist to his very heart's core, and knew well that this moment was sure to come. So, beholding his listener well prepared, he opened the box, upon which he had kept his hand lest the Count should open it himself, and drew thence a long strip of parchment, from which he read the following extraordinary statement, written in a clear, firm hand, in lines of equal length, and with a broad margin all round. But he did not at once proceed to read it aloud; he knew far too well the value of the *mise en scène* he had been at so much pains to get up. Neither did he give the box to his companion, but deliberately proceeded to inflict what promised at first to be a dry and dreary yarn upon the patience of his listener, who, however, has often since confessed that without it the rest of the experience would have been vastly less exciting.

The antiquary repeated over again what he had

told the Count but five minutes before : that he had arrived in England on a special mission from the great French historian, Guizot, to gather scraps from the Tower of London, and that he had been engaged at this work for the last seven months. It was while diving to the very bottom of one of the rotten old tea-chests with which the economical English administration had replaced the wondrously carved oaken *cabinets* wherein the state papers had been doubtless originally secured, that he had lighted on the box. Here an unmistakable sigh of impatience accompanying the twirling of the silken cord which bound the Count's slender waist and secured the gray flannel dressing-gown in which he was attired, caused the geometrical countenance of the savant to relax into a smile, and he deliberately replaced the parchment in the box, and shut the lid down with a sharp report. He then turned suddenly towards M. de Rouvière, and asked him coolly if he had ever seen the Sainte Chapelle. 'Of course, of course,' replied the young man, closing his hand tightly with that *crispé* movement usual with Frenchmen suffering from *ennui*. 'Well, then, Monsieur le Comte, you must remember the figures of the twelve apostles—that is, have you seen the restorations now going on by the king's orders?' 'Yes, yes; of course I have,' exclaimed the Count peevishly; 'for the love of God, get on,' and he pulled out his watch with a jerk. 'Never mind the time; better put off the narrative,' exclaimed the stranger. 'I assure you I am in no hurry; indeed I have the whole day at your disposal.' The case being evidently too desperate for resistance, the unhappy victim gathered his dressing-gown over his knees, and flung himself backwards in his chair, clasping his hands and groaning aloud. The stranger, however, paid little heed to these manifestations; he seemed rather to enjoy them. He settled himself quite comfortably before he spoke again, and then merely said, 'Then you must have observed the figure of St Peter already set up in the first archway from the altar.' The Count nodded his head sharply without unclosing his eyes, so that the gesture of the speaker's hand raised far above his head to express height and grandeur was totally lost upon him. 'You must have observed that there are six arches on either side the aisle—they are for the statues of the twelve apostles.' The Count thought it but right to nod again, but this time he changed his position, placing his right hand across his left, and twirling his two thumbs in contrary directions as a token that he was listening.

The savant now drew close to his host and tapped with long, hooked nails upon his knee, as he whispered forth:

'Well, the whole twelve are to be of the same height and size as St Peter.'

The words seemed not to produce the smallest effect upon the listener; but upon the speaker himself they acted like magic. He bounded in his chair, snapped his fingers in the air, and laughed so nervously that he was seized with a fit of coughing, which caused poor M. de Rouvière to be seized with a most intense longing to be alone, and his friend—well, no matter where. But when the coughing was over, and the stranger sufficiently recovered to speak again, the indifference of the listener was soon over likewise.

'You have doubtless heard that these twelve apostles are to be the exact reproduction of those which stood there before the Revolution.'

M. de Rouvière had not heard this nor anything else concerning the statues, and therefore could do nothing but again change the position of his hands, while the speaker continued:

'That is to say, the *imitation* will be as exact as plaster and ormolu and chrysocoloured glass and composition *can* resemble solid silver! virgin gold! and precious stones!'

The last sentence was uttered slowly and deliberately, and with a stress upon each word; and after a pause he continued:

'Of such materials as these were the holy effigies constructed which once filled the arches down the nave of the Sainte Chapelle. When Saint Louis founded the Sainte Chapelle the whole treasury of the kingdom was at his command. He was no miser, as you know, and dealt out his homage to heaven with no niggard hand. The twelve apostles were of such value that they became, with the altar gates of Notre Dame and the silver branches of Saint Denis, not the mere appendage of such and such a chapel but part of the treasure of France (*le trésor de France*), which no sovereign even in the sorest strait had ever dared to touch. But few, as you can well imagine, could be entrusted with the knowledge of the marvellous truth. To the vulgar the statues seemed composed of nothing more than stone or plaster silvered over. The crowns were supposed to be of coloured glass, and the round disc-like patens the holy fraternity hold in their hands of copper burnished to the hue of gold. Little could the people dream, as they bent the knee before each, that the figures were aught beside the revered semblance of the followers of our Lord, and they worshipped them with the cold lip-service of indifference and custom. Had they but known the truth, how fervent would have been their homage! how ardent would have been their adoration! None would have turned away to the high altar could they have imagined that the real and true god of their worship lay beneath the tarnished metal and age-bedimmed ornaments which met their view. But the secret was well guarded, and from generation to generation by none of those to whom it was entrusted was it ever betrayed. Even up to the darkest days of the Revolution had the statues remained unharmed; but a moment arrived when danger drew so near, even for the sake of the small value attributed to the supposed mere coatings of silver and of gold, to the burnished copper and coloured glass, that the few trusty hearts who knew the secret determined to rescue the richest treasure of the French crown from the hands of the despoilers. On the very night of the sacking of Saint Denis these loyal and noble gentlemen met together. Your grandfather was amongst the number. Here is his seal and here his signature.'

The savant paused once more to push the box towards M. de Rouvière, who was surprised into the most eager attention.

'All I have told you is from inference and research, into which I have been led by the writing on this parchment and the knowledge which all readers of the history of the time must possess of the extraordinary and sudden disappearance of the statues of the Sainte Chapelle.'

You will see the fact recorded in many of the pamphlets and opuscles of the day, attributing to "a guilty fanaticism" the carrying off what had become (however trifling in value) the property of the nation. At any rate, when the mob broke in the statues were missing; and more than that, no trace of them has ever been found to this day. Now, read the parchment and you will find it all explained.'

M. de Rouvière took the parchment from the box with a trembling hand. He could not account for the emotion with which he was seized, and he tried to shake it off and to appear as calm as possible while he read in an undertone the following extraordinary document:

'We, the undersigned, true and faithful followers of the king, deeming the mighty treasure of Saint Louis to be in danger of spoliation, have determined on depositing it in a place of safety. This treasure of Saint Louis consists of twelve statues of the Holy Apostles, each one of molten silver and of immense weight, comprising the patens which each apostle carries, and which is of solid gold. The jewels which adorn the crowns and robes are principally of rubies, sapphires, and oriental pearls; those on the robe of Saint John, among which is a starred sapphire, are alone worth twenty thousand livres. To rescue this inestimable treasure we have resolved to bury it in a place known to ourselves alone, each of the undersigned being bound by a solemn oath never to reveal even at the death-hour the place chosen for concealment. We have all agreed that the spot shall be where the lines of latitude and longitude cross each other upon the map of France accompanying this document. The place is well adapted for the purpose by reason of the facility of water-carriage from the quay and of easy landing close to the spot; and the owner of the land is one on whom but little suspicion of aid in the cause of Church and King is ever likely to fall.'

Here followed the signatures, fourteen in number, each one of the greatest nobles of the land, accompanied by his seal and *paraphe*. Monsieur de Rouvière needed no telling which was that of his grandfather. He recognised it on the instant, and his heart beat quick.

To the parchment were appended several long thin strips of paper of a dingy colour, the first 'accused reception,' as the French say, by the *patron* of the lugger-boat *Margoton* of Rouen of two barrels of rusty nails and scrap-iron, and then another to the same purpose giving receipt for two others, until the whole number of twelve was completed, on different boats belonging to different towns in Normandy. In those days such boats were in great numbers employed in bringing up groceries from Havre and dry goods from Rouen, so that they were easy to freight on returning from any one of the quays of Paris. All these barrels were the property of Denis Dutailis, the *marchand de feraille* on the quay, and consigned by him to his brother René Dutailis, who lived in the little village of Fulchiron, and would either fetch the goods from the landing-place of the town to which the boat belonged, or await their arrival at the nearest point of the road leading inland from the Seine to Fulchiron. This happened fortunately to be the stone-yard of Maître Lambert, the mason at Saint Landelle,

where the barges and lugger-boats of the Seine were wont to stop on their way both up and down the river, and whose wharf, being provided with powerful cranes for raising the stone, would make the landing easy.

'And this is all,' said the stranger as he folded up the document, replacing it in the box, which he locked with care. Then, handing the key to Monsieur de Rouvière, he added, 'To you, Monsieur le Comte, belong this box and its contents, and therefore to you alone should it be confided. The historical researches I have made concerning the affair were made *con amore*; they are in my way and have interested me: the geographical ones are of your domain; and it is for you to trace the precious treasure step by step to its hiding-place. I have my ideas concerning the locality, from historical associations and the habit I have acquired of combination and inference with regard to historical events.' And here the savant resumed the look of baby-cunning he had worn before. 'It would be for me to suggest whose land would have been chosen at that precise moment for the burying of the statues; it is for you to discover in what direction that land must lie.' The stranger rose as he uttered the last words. Monsieur de Rouvière was so bewildered with the thoughts which came crowding to his brain that he arose also, without any further idea than that of an intense desire to be alone, that he might examine the box and the parchment without interruption.

He was an older man by some years when at last he told the tale of that memorable adventure, yet when relating the story to his friends he still dwelt with remark on the want of courtesy of which he was guilty on that occasion, never to have inquired the stranger's name or address, and to have suffered him to depart without even so much as a word of thanks for the preference shown to himself in this extraordinary affair. For some time after the departure of his strange visitor, the young attaché remained as if in a dream, gazing steadfastly at the metal casket as though it contained the key of his future destiny, examining it in every light, as it were, before he ventured to open it. The very sound of the metal across the woollen table-cover grated on his nerves, and he actually started when, scarcely conscious of the act, he placed the key within the lock, and the lid flew open, exhibiting the folded parchment and discoloured seals with which it was adorned.

The document once drawn from its hiding-place, the Count proceeded to treat the affair in a more business-like way, and he perused it over first of all mentally, then in a murmur, and finally aloud—even to the very last of the fourteen signatures appended thereto. Every one of the receipts of the various *patrons* were also carefully examined, even to the shape and pattern of the crosses by which those who could not write had expressed their adherence to the terms. He unfolded the tawny little map of France which lay still undisturbed at the bottom of the box; but the Count's education, conducted on modern principles, had not gone so far back in geography as the ancient provincial subdivisions of France, and he found himself all abroad as he gazed upon the widespread 'governments' of 1785. He mused away the whole of that quiet Sunday

afternoon still in his dressing-gown and slippers, his elbows resting on the table, his forehead resting in his hands, gazing down upon the box which seemed to act with magnetic spell and send him into a wild dream of the future, wherein he beheld the shattered fortunes of his house completely restored by his own share in the wealth thus brought to him. Thus he mused until the first dinner-bell aroused him from his reverie; and then he started up in sore perplexity, for had he not told the *maître d'hôtel* that his place would be vacant that day at the ambassador's table, as he had promised to meet a friend at four o'clock in the Park and drive with him to the 'Star and Garter' at Richmond should the weather prove fine. The weather *had* proved fine enough no doubt, for the sun, just now about to set, was streaming into the room, belying the threat of fog and rain and mist held forth in the morning; and he looked with dismay out of the window on the green wavy lines in the enclosure—the merry children at play on the grass, the gaily-dressed Sunday folks hurrying to and fro, ay, and even the dusky though sunlit old statue of Pitt.

What the Count did with the remainder of the day has never been part of the tale. He has never disclosed more than that, having carefully secreted the mysterious casket in a safe place, and dressed himself, he went out; and did not return till past midnight—when, despite the lateness of the hour, he read once more the parchment before retiring to bed.

A week or two afterwards the Count set out for France, furnished with what he deemed every necessary information concerning the probable locality of the *Saint Coin*, as the hiding-place was referred to by the signers of the document. The question had been submitted to several of the most prudent members of the aristocracy. Science had been called in to aid in establishing the point at which the lines of latitude and longitude crossed each other; and this was found to be near a village called Viviers, in Normandy, which on inquiry proved to be the property of the Orleans family! It had formed part of the restored private domain of Louis-Philippe, and had been sold in lots—consequently at the time at which the document was penned must have belonged to Philippe Égalité! He was the person who was 'never likely to raise suspicion of connivance in any attempt to aid the interests of royalty.' The Count, accompanied by a few trusty friends, went straight to the precise spot indicated in the parchment—in the midst of a ploughed field, at that very moment in preparation for sowing turnips. There really *was* something remarkable about the place, for on it stood a melancholy-looking clump of poplars, beneath which flourished, rank and dank, all kinds of brambles and under-wood, strangely out of keeping with the care and cultivation bestowed on the rest of the ground. The farmer to whom the field belonged, asked to explain why such disorder was suffered to exist where all besides betrayed such industry, replied that he was bound by oath upon the crucifix sworn to his dying father never to disturb by spade or plough that one particular spot. 'Old folks have queer fancies,' said the farmer, 'and this patch of ground seemed to possess some religious value in my father's eyes. He often said he bought the wood (it was all wood when the lot was sold)

merely for the sake of that ugly clump of poplars; and when we cut down the other trees and ploughed up the ground he carefully reserved that patch from sharing the fate of the rest. I was a boy then, and curious; but he would tell me no more than that he inherited the reverence he felt for the place from his father, who would often kneel and pray there, and when he died spoke of it as the *Saint Coin* or Holy Corner, which ought never to be disturbed.'

The effect of the words was electrical. The attaché, and the capitalist and engineer by whom he was accompanied, received a prodigious shock, and the affair seemed now certain. A fabulous weight of silver, besides virgin gold and precious stones, lay beneath their feet! The difficulty was to hide their emotion from the farmer, and not appear too anxious about the purchase of that identical turnip-field. So they turned aside in apparent indifference, and began to talk about the capabilities of the place for general purposes. The engineer was mentally making his measurements; the capitalist was already reckoning the fabulous result; the Count was already building a château on the very spot where stood the poplars. But wise and prudent men were they, and so returned to the little inn without even speaking of the bargain they were so anxious to conclude.

The field was bought, a field of seven *arpents*. But little above its real value was paid for it, the farmer accepting over and above the price fixed upon a small sum as conscience-money for the *Saint Coin*, having been persuaded for a consideration that the oath was personal to himself alone, and that no harm would come of it so long as it was not he who disturbed the bones doubtless buried beneath the poplars, nor gave his consent to their being displaced. The bargain being concluded, Monsieur de Rouvière had to return to England; and there he formed an association for the thorough exploration of the spot and its surroundings. With him were associated six members of the English aristocracy, intimate friends of his, and six French noblemen. Lord L—, at that time a cabinet minister, was amongst the English members of the company, as well as another member of the House of Lords subsequently high in office under the British government. These gentlemen agreed to make excavations in a certain field at Viviers in Normandy—to share alike the expense of the undertaking, and also the profits which might arise from the sale of the treasure found there. For nearly half-a-century has the search been going on. It is proceeding still at intervals and by the hands of private speculators; it has some time since been abandoned as hopeless by the original association. Deeper and deeper still have the excavations been carried on; the square patch of poplars has disappeared. Indeed the present generation of labourers declare that the exact site of the plantation is scarcely certain; but the opinion is that it stood far to the left of the diggings still proceeding in 1870. Thousands and thousands of pounds sterling have been swallowed up in this hitherto fruitless search, and the place is well known throughout the country as 'Chaos.'

The writer of this article was told by a gentleman of Falaise, the Marquis de Graveraud, who



at one time belonged to the association, that he believed more than two millions of francs had been engulfed in the works; but that when he himself visited the place he felt convinced that the diggings and levellings, and the carting away of the earth from the excavations, could not have been accomplished under double that amount! In many places the diggings have proceeded to the depth of two hundred feet. In all they have been stopped by natural causes alone—generally the presence of granite; in one only by the warm gray mud peculiar to this part of the country, and which, filling up again as fast as it was removed, rendered perseverance useless. Up to this moment nothing whatever has been found, not even the trace of any previous disturbance of the soil; still the speculators do not despair. The search, I repeat, still goes on. The speculation is considered as good as ever; the speculators alone are changed. All manner of ingenious explanations and excuses for the non-success of past searches are invented. Not one reasonable argument against the successful issue of the search has ever been listened to by the searchers; but onward they go, clinging to the shadow which is dragging them forward to the precipice of their own excavating, and where they have already beheld their predecessors engulfed.

This affair of Saint Coin is the last organisation of talent and capital for the discovery of a national treasure. Single cases that have come under our own eye within the last few years are some of them even more full of romance and adventure than this. We must reserve them for another occasion, omitting, however, cases already made public, such as that of the three bankers, the Brothers M—, whose discovery of forty millions in specie which had been concealed in the cellars of their uncle's house in the Faubourg St Germain made all Paris quiver with emotion only a few years since. The Prince de B—, when his parents had been guillotined at Alençon during the Revolution, was placed out by the Commune as a charity-apprentice to a shepherd in one of the villages of the environs; on falling into a dry well covered over with weeds and moss, he found himself all bleeding and sore, not from the contact of stones and pebbles, but from that of bags of six-franc crown-pieces with which the country people of the place still declare the well to have been half-filled up. There is still the treasure of King Stanislaus, buried in the hillside just without the gates of Nancy, in endeavouring to secure which M. Fay, the father of Leontine the whilom child-phenomenon of the French stage, and afterwards reader to the Empress of Russia, expended the whole of his own fortune and his daughter's earnings besides. There are still the jewels of Madame Dubarry lying buried in the toolhouse at Luciennes, although the said toolhouse has been undermined, and its walls have crumbled to the earth by dint of the diggings which have created a yawning chasm where its floor once lay. There is the treasure of the Duc de Raguse, who buried the military chests at Belleville when he delivered Paris into the hands of the allies; there is the chest of Spanish doubloons which lies still undiscovered in the Island of Sequia at Neuilly, on the search for which great sums have been expended in vain. Of the treasure of

the château of Pantin, something has really been found—a series of empty earthen vases beneath the flooring of the rustic ballroom in the park, which evidently once contained something of value, for they are all stamped with the arms of Orleans and the cipher of the Duke and that of Madame de M— entwined. This discovery, strange to say, instead of disheartening the seekers by showing them that somebody earlier awake than they had been before them, has given them fresh hope; and they go on, cheered by the conviction that 'where that stood may stand another twice as good.'

Thus there are treasures enough well authenticated and still to be discovered. The writer sincerely hopes that if any of his readers, enlightened by the indications here given, try the search and are successful, they will remember to whom they owe their good fortune! Having himself been engaged in one or two of the more interesting of the searches for ever going on in Paris, the writer offers his experience (all he has gained in the pursuit) to the intelligent and enterprising, feeling perfectly convinced that in every case the treasure sought for still exists undisturbed, to be discovered by those already possessed of a greater treasure than any yet unearthed—virtue, self-abnegation, and personal disinterestedness, which the old monks declared to be indispensable for success in treasure-seeking!

## THE MONTH:

### SCIENCE AND ARTS.

A WELL-EQUIPPED laboratory, which is said to be the first of its kind built by the state in this or any other country, was recently inaugurated in London, its object being to carry out the important analytical work required by the Inland Revenue Board and by the crown contract department. This work, so important to the country at large, has hitherto been performed in very inadequate quarters at Somerset House; and the government chemists may be congratulated upon having now an establishment in which their difficult duties can be carried out under far more favourable conditions. The general public has very little idea of what these duties consist, or in what a large measure they affect the taxpayers' pockets. Here are beautiful appliances for testing the strength of brewers' 'wort,' so as to adjust the dutiable value of beer. Wines and spirits of all kinds are also carefully analysed here, so that it may be noted which rate of duty they will pass under. Tobacco is tested here, so that any adulterating leaf or added moisture can be readily detected; there is apparatus for determining the flashing-point of mineral oils; and tea, coffee, rum, chocolate, and other food-stuffs are examined as to their purity and agreement with samples submitted, before John Bull puts his hand into his capacious pocket to buy them for his soldiers and sailors. Even the cloth and serge used in the services are submitted to careful tests; and quite recently the dried and compressed vegetables going out to India for our frontier troops have gone through the searching examination of the analysts here. It frequently happens that in cases of food adulteration the experts on either side will differ widely as to the composition of the substance under dispute. It will be the

duty of the new laboratory to give the final decision in such cases. The building is close to the Law Courts, and is under the supervision of Professor Thorpe.

A curious industry has sprung up in Spain since the decline of silk-culture there, in the production of what is known as silkworm-gut for fishing-lines. The grub is fed on mulberry leaves as usual in silk-culture; but before it begins to spin—that is, in May and June—it is killed by immersion in vinegar. The substance which would have formed the cocoon is then drawn out from its body in the form of a thick silken thread, which is treated with chemicals and afterwards dried. These threads are made up in bundles of one hundred, and the Spanish peasants travel with them along the shores of the Mediterranean as far as France. The best quality of thread is round, the flat form being inferior and due to unhealthiness in the worm. The chief seat of this industry is Murcia.

Many a romance has found its chief incident in the recovery of treasure from a submerged wreck; and it must be confessed that such an incident invariably carries great interest with it. This is intensified when the story is founded upon fact; and it would be difficult to find one of more absorbing interest than that which has recently been told of the steamer *Skjro*. This vessel sailed from Cartagena for London in April 1891 with a valuable cargo, which included nine thousand pounds' worth of bar silver. She was caught in a fog off Cape Finisterre, struck on a reef, and finally went down about two miles off that coast in thirty fathoms of water. Many efforts were made to recover this treasure, and last year some of the silver bars were raised. But the wreck lies in such a wild and boisterous position, there are such strong currents to contend with, and the depth, 180 feet, is so near the limit beyond which no diving operations can be carried on, that the work has presented almost superhuman difficulties. Operations were resumed this summer with complete success, and the whole of the silver has now been recovered. In addition to the difficulties already set forth it was found by the divers that the deck of the vessel had collapsed, and much of the framework of the ship had to be blown out by dynamite before the cargo could be reached. The chief diver, to whose indomitable pluck the recovery of this treasure is due, Angel Erostarbe by name, reports that the wreck is now just a heap of old iron, no part of it except the engines and boilers standing higher than himself.

It seems strange to British ears to learn that vintage operations commenced at Cardiff early in October last, for Wales has not hitherto been regarded as a wine-producing country. But our readers will doubtless remember that the Marquis of Bute some years ago started experimental vineyards here, and the success attending his efforts has already been recorded in these columns. There are two vineyards, one at Castell Loch and the other at Swanbridge, and they are both planted with a hardy kind of grape from the colder wine-producing districts of France. The vines are planted in rows about three feet apart, and there are nearly five thousand to the acre. It is expected that about forty hogsheads of wine will result from this vintage, that being

the quantity yielded in 1893. The wine has been described as very fine in flavour; it is the pure juice of the grape without any admixture except a trace of sugar. The vineyards are under the care of Mr Pettigrew, F.R.H.S., who has propagated hundreds of vines from the original French stock, many of which have been sent to different parts of the country for experimental purposes. As yet none of the diseases which have wrought such havoc amid the vineyards on the continent have made their appearance on the Marquis of Bute's property.

Mr Henniker Heaton, to whom the public is so much indebted for the many valuable postal reforms which he has initiated, has recently pointed out the ridiculous system, or rather want of system, observed in counting words in telegrams, certain compound names of places being counted as one word and others as two or three. In a telegram to De Vere Gardens, for example, the sender has to pay for three words; but in one sent to Llanarmon-Dyffryn-Ceirrog-Ruabon, that formidable address, with more than double the letters of the other, counts as one word only. According to the postal authorities Herne Bay is one word and Herne Hill two; King's Cross (Halifax) is one word, but King's Cross (London) is two; non-delivery one word, and short delivery two. These are only a few of the absurd anomalies pointed out by Mr Heaton and emphasised by being placed in parallel columns. He suggests that either all such compound words should be counted as one, or that addresses should be free, which is the rule in all the Australasian colonies. It is difficult to understand how the present method of word-counting came into vogue; certainly it cannot much longer stand in the face of the wholesome ridicule which Mr Heaton's strictures have excited.

The locust has always been regarded as one of the most formidable of crop-pests, and hitherto little has been done in the way of combating its ravages. Recently, however, experiments have been carried out in Natal, and a government report of the successful results obtained has been issued, which will be studied with interest by agriculturists all the world over. The locusts were attacked while still in the 'hopper' stage, and one Natal cultivator succeeded in clearing his farm of seven hundred acres of the pest in ten days. The remedy tried with such success is arsenic, and the mixture used consists of one pound of caustic soda dissolved in four gallons of boiling water, to which is afterwards added one pound of arsenic. The decoction is then well stirred and boiled for a few minutes, the operator taking care not to inhale the fumes. This forms a stock solution which should be carefully labelled and kept under lock and key. For use, half-a-gallon of stock solution is added to four gallons of hot or cold water, in which ten pounds of brown sugar have been dissolved. Or, as an alternative, half-a-gallon of the poison may be mixed with five gallons of treacle. The sweet liquid thus compounded is distributed over the land, splashed with a large brush upon anything which the locusts are known to have a craving for, or maize stalks and grass may be dipped in the fluid and spread about the roads and fields. The locusts are speedily attracted by the sweet stuff, and die by thousands. It is needless to say that

the poison is quite as deadly to winged locusts; but it is quite impossible to know when they are coming, so that it is better to aim at destroying the creatures while still in the 'hopper' stage.

In a recent lecture on 'The Goldfields of Alaska' delivered by Mr Harry de Windt, one difficulty which besets the traveller was dwelt upon, which so far as we can remember has not been alluded to by the many writers who have detailed the obstacles to progress towards the new Eldorado. Mr de Windt says that camp life in Alaska is made unbearable by swarms of mosquitoes, and that, for the first few days on the Yukon, conversation, sleep, and even eating were out of the question. Famished with hunger, after a hard day's work, he was unable to raise a mouthful to his lips because of the persistent onslaughts of these terrible insects. The irritation caused by their bites was so great as to lead to positive illness, and the natives suffer tortures from May until September, although their bodies are smothered with rancid oil as a partial protection from attack. An Alaskan mosquito will torture a dog to death, and both bear and deer will take to the water in self-defence. In the tent occupied by the explorer a piece of rag was kept smouldering all night, nearly suffocating the inmates, but having no apparent effect upon the bloodthirsty insect marauders. Mr de Windt sums up his complaint against the mosquitoes by describing them as the greatest curse of the land.

A steam lifeboat on a new principle has recently been added to the fleet of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and has been placed at New Brighton—at the entrance to the Mersey—for service in the port of Liverpool. The boat is built of steel, is fifty-five feet in length, and will accommodate a crew of nine men and forty passengers. The propelling power is hydraulic—that is to say, sea-water is pumped into the vessel and forced out through tubes which are fitted fore and aft. This method of propulsion does away with any necessity for paddles or propellers, which are so apt to become a source of danger when floating wreckage is about. The new vessel, which is named *The Queen*, is constructed to consume both coal and liquid fuel; and in a recent trial her total consumption of the combined fuel was eight hundred and forty pounds in a two hours' run. The highest speed attained was close upon nine knots, but it is expected that this will be exceeded on further trial. The cost of this boat—the third steam lifeboat which has been built in this country—was £5000.

There are now very few spots on the earth's surface which have not been explored by man, and it is quite refreshing to learn that an island, called Christmas Island, which lies about two hundred miles south of Java, awaits examination and report by scientific experts. One thing only is known about its resources, and that is that phosphates abound there; and as a natural consequence a company is now sending out a working party to develop an industry there. But a far more interesting part of the story is that Dr John Murray, of Edinburgh, has offered to the trustees of the British Museum to defray the cost of sending out a naturalist to the island for the purpose of making observations and collecting specimens of fauna and flora, provided that the trustees will appoint an official to undertake this mission. As

a result of this generous offer Mr C. W. Andrews, of the geological department of the Museum, has gone out with instructions to make an exhaustive survey and exploration of this island, which is about the same size as Jersey, the area being about a hundred square miles. The highest point is about twelve hundred feet above sea-level, and most of the ground is covered by a thick forest growth. There is a small population of twenty-two—half this number being Europeans.

It is a well-known fact that fish, like insects, are attracted to any bright light; and a French entomologist has lately taken advantage of this circumstance in fishing for specimens in a pond. With a portable battery and a small incandescent electric lamp attached to a net he was able to secure a large number of fish, larvae, tadpoles, &c., at one operation. The net, measuring about one yard across, was slowly lowered into the water, and when it reached the bottom of the pond the little lamp above it was connected with the battery. All the living creatures within reach of the apparatus rushed towards the light, and were immediately secured in the net. It is obvious that the method is applicable on a far larger scale, and may prove to be of great service to night-fishermen.

The Welsbach incandescent burner, which has done so much for gas-lighting, has now been applied to mineral oil lamps with entire success. A special form of burner is employed, upon which is hung the mantle or network of earthy material, the incandescence of which gives the system its name. It is claimed for this lamp that it affords a light of fifty candle-power with one-third the consumption of oil of any other petroleum lamp of the same efficiency. The wick is of annular form, and the lamp is so contrived that, should the delicate mantle fail from any cause, the oil can be burnt in the ordinary manner until a fresh mantle is procured. It is on the life of this mantle that the success of the system will depend. We noticed in our examination of the lamp that the mesh of the mantle was much coarser than that in common use with gas, and possibly this will tend to greater permanence. The Incandescent Gas-light Company, who have introduced the new lamp, credit the mantles with an efficiency of one thousand hours, but we should be inclined to regard this as an exaggerated estimate.

A trial was recently made of an apparatus which will enable firemen to remain in dense smoke or other irrespirable atmosphere for many minutes without inconvenience. This contrivance, which is known as the Vajen Bader patent smoke-protector, takes the form of a helmet-shaped head-covering fitted with mica eyeholes, and supplied with fresh air from a reservoir containing a supply in a compressed state. In the recent trials, a mass of leather, cotton waste, and other material calculated to give off suffocating fumes, was lighted in a closed police cell, and a man wearing the apparatus was able to remain in the midst of the smoke for twenty minutes, the great heat evolved at last terminating the experiment. It is expected that the invention will prove remarkably valuable in locating a hidden fire on shipboard.

There have been so many instances of alleged water-finding by means of the divining-rod that the circumstances of a case which recently

occurred at Amptill are not without interest. It would seem that the urban district council of that place engaged a water-diviner, and incurred in doing so an expense of thirteen pounds odd, being ten guineas fee and travelling expenses. The district auditor refused to pass this item of the accounts on the ground that the water-diviner had made pretence to a power which he did not possess. He regarded his claim 'as an imposition on the minds of the credulous, and treated him as a person whom it was not competent for the council to employ for the purpose for which he had been employed, and the payment for his employment as one for which there was no authority in law.' It is now competent for the council to appeal to the Local Government Board and subsequently to the High Court; and it is perhaps as well that they should do so in order that a popular superstition may for ever be set at rest.

The government botanist to the Cape Colony, Professor MacOwen, contributes to the *Kew Bulletin* an interesting and valuable paper upon fruit-growing at the Cape, and the opening which it affords to those with the requisite knowledge of orchard work. Intelligent and practised growers alone are needed, and there is an unfailing market in the up-country, to say nothing of what could be done abroad. 'We want them,' says the professor, 'from England, from the States, from California, in fact from anywhere where the skill and experience required have run into every-day practice. This is the immigration wanted just now at the Cape, to catch at the opportunity of the moment, and to turn skilled fruit-growing into gold. No question that success awaits the man who knows how to deal with fruit-trees, to break his ground up properly, to drain, to prune, to gather, to pack for market up-country or for market in Covent Garden, and who has the well-founded contempt for the

slovenly style of letting things grow themselves and taking as a crop what chance sends and insect plagues leave.' It may be noted that the seasons at the Cape fall conversely with those of Europe and the United States, and of course this represents a great advantage to the fruit-grower. Professor MacOwen advises those who go out to place their money in a bank on arriving, and seek out a situation with some one who is cultivating his own land, so as to become accustomed to colonial ways and methods. To begin without local knowledge would be to court failure at the outset.

### CHRISTMAS.

With roseate light the east is all aglow;  
In tranquil beauty smiles the Christmas morn;  
And far across the softly-lying snow  
The bells send joyful tidings: Christ is born!

From glistening leaves the holly berries show  
Like coral beads against each wreathed wall;  
While gleams the pearl-hung branch of mistletoe  
Alike in lowly home and stately hall.

Heart-sunshine brightens every glad young face;  
Even older folks, whose heads are turning gray,  
Lay down Time's burdens for a little space,  
And join the children in their happy play.

Sweet memories put forth their tender plea;  
Forgotten friendships press their claims once more;  
Unseen but felt, Faith, Hope, and Charity  
Walk through our midst as in the days of yore.

About our lives the old traditions cling;  
The old deep-rooted customs still abide—  
Still to our hearts the 'herald angels' sing:  
'Let Peace and Goodwill reign at Christmastide.'  
E. MATHESON.

*Volume XIV. of the Fifth Series of CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL is now completed, price Nine Shillings. A Title-page and Index, price One Penny, have been prepared, and may be ordered through any bookseller.*

*A cloth case for binding the whole of the numbers for 1897 is also ready. Back numbers to complete sets may be had at all times.*

The January Part of Chambers's Journal (published about 21st December) will contain the opening Chapters of a Romance of powerful interest by

JOHN BUCHAN

ENTITLED

JOHN BURNET OF BARNES

Also a Novelette, by GUY BOOTHBY, and Stories by other well-known writers of fiction.

END OF THE FOURTEENTH VOLUME

Printed and Published by W. & R. Chambers, Limited,  
47 Paternoster Row, London; and 339 High Street, Edinburgh.

*All Rights Reserved.*



# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

## Extra Christmas Number

### CONTENTS

THE MILLIONAIRE OF HORNIBROOK ISLAND. By GUY BOOTHBY.....	PAGE 1
WITNESS TO THE MARRIAGE. By W. E. CULE.....	" 14
THE LAST VOYAGE OF MARTIN VALLANCE. By JOHN ARTHUR BARRY ..	20

CHRISTMAS 1897.

## THE MILLIONAIRE OF HORNIBROOK ISLAND.

By GUY BOOTHBY,

AUTHOR OF 'DR NIKOLA,' 'THE FASCINATION OF THE KING,' ETC.



It is just possible that there may be more unpleasant places upon the face of this vastly overrated planet than the island which furnishes the latter portion of the name of this story. I must confess, however, that, so far, I have been fortunate enough never to have become acquainted with them. Hornibrook Island, or the island I have disguised under that name, is situated—well, on second thoughts, I don't think I will divulge its real location, and for two good and sufficient reasons. First, because I may, some day, have occasion to revisit it; and second, because you can find it on any map, or in the Admiralty Guide to the Islands of the Western Pacific, and discover its position and its advantages for yourself. Still the fact remains, it is Hornibrook Island, and when you have said that, it is doubtful what else you can find to say about it. To give you an idea of what it is like as a place of residence, I might inform you that at such times as its three hundred and fifty-four white inhabitants have occasion to refer to a certain equatorial kingdom, where most of them believe they possess pre-emptive rights to town lots, they do not call it by

its own historic and more familiar title, but speak of it as Hornibrook Island, and feel convinced in their own minds that they have made themselves understood by everybody.

As for those inhabitants, they are a varied lot, hailing from every portion of the globe, and varied are the professions they follow. Some keep gambling and drinking saloons, while the rest patronise them. There are storekeepers, pearl-divers, bêche-de-mer, tortoise-shell, and tripang gatherers, sandalwood-cutters, owners of trading-schooners, and a sprinkling of beach-combers, whose only use in life, it would appear, is to allow the islanders to feel that there really is a rung in the social ladder below their own, and to lend an air of picturesque local colour to the home letters of such tourists as venture so far off the beaten track as to make their acquaintance. There are also upwards of a couple of hundred other inhabitants, made up of Aborigines, Chinamen, and Manilla, Solomon, and New Guinea boys; but they scarcely count. Except at certain seasons, this hotch-potch of humanity lives happily enough together; during those seasons, however, it must be confessed it is not the sort of place the directors of one's

life assurance society would choose for one to dwell in, except on the payment of an exceptionally high premium. What I mean will be the better understood when I say that the graveyard is situated in a long, damp gully at the back of the town, and is by far the most thickly populated portion of the settlement. Funerals take place as soon after death as possible, and when the ceremony is over—that is to say, as soon as the mud, which they dignify by calling earth, has been poured in—the dear departed is forgotten until the sale of his effects, a day or two later, brings him once more into the remembrance of his friends. The last time I was in Hornibrook Island I was informed by a leading citizen that the place was woefully changed, that it was not at all what it had been in my time. In the six months preceding my arrival they had only had six murders, ten suicides, and three cases of hand-to-hand fighting in the streets. He was a well-set-up, dependable sort of man himself, was my informant, and had the peculiar knack of being able to throw a long-bladed knife with such accuracy as to pierce an ace of clubs pinned against the wall fifteen feet away. He was a shareholder in the graveyard company, so it was said, and every one admitted that he had been at some trouble to stock his property.

On the night I am about to describe to you—one which the majority of the inhabitants of Hornibrook Island were destined in after-days to look back upon with what could only be delicately described as mingled feelings—it was plain that something unusual was affecting the settlement. There was an expression of amused expectation on all the faces one met that was only there when, as in this case, the schooner *Paul and Virginia*, its one connecting-link with civilisation, from San Francisco, put in an appearance, or something equally out of the ordinary run of events occurred. Outside the 'Pearler's Rest' men were clustered together in small knots. They nudged each other, winked, laughed, and afterwards glanced up the strip of moonlit road that ran from the beach away into the centre of the island. Evidently it was from this quarter that the somebody, whoever he might be, who was occasioning the general hilarity was expected to put in an appearance.

His audience, however, had to wait somewhat longer than they expected, for the clock on the second shelf of the bar in the hotel behind them had struck eight before a little stir among those

at the end of the veranda, and a whispered 'Look out, he's coming!' convinced them that they were not, after all, to be defrauded of their fun.

The cause of this excitement was a tall, shabbily dressed man of between forty and fifty years of age, who was coming slowly down the centre of the road, whistling dolefully to himself as he walked. His face, when seen by daylight, was long, thin, and extraordinarily angular—a good specimen, indeed, of the type that is sometimes termed hatchet-shaped. It was in nowise handsome, nor was it improved by the patches of sandy gray hair that grew luxuriantly on either temple. The eyes were wide apart, and somewhat large in proportion to the face; but they were set too deep in the head to be of any assistance in relieving the general effect. His frame was sinewy and spare, his back spoilt by a sad deformity, his arms and legs long and, like his face, very thin. A stranger would also have noticed, as he came closer, that his knees brushed together as he walked, and that he was a little lame on one foot. On his head he wore a large straw-hat, and round his neck a red cotton handkerchief was carelessly twisted. His clothes had once been good, and might have been cut by a fashionable tailor; now, however, they had plainly reached the end of their tether. As far as his personal character was concerned, he was well known to be the best-tempered, the kindest-hearted, as well as the laziest vagabond on the island; and the last accusation should count for something in a place where no one was able to say with truth that he was fond of work. He rejoiced in the name of Gabriel Dollman, and he was accustomed to tell people that he was an American, only son of Millionaire Dollman, and heir to ranches in Texas, town lots in 'Frisco, Chicago, Baltimore, and New York, railroads all over the States, and upwards of five millions sterling in hard cash. Of course nobody believed him for an instant, but that troubled him little. He lived on in the island, after his own fashion, expecting always to hear that the old man, as he called him, was dead, and that he had come into his property. The small community of Hornibrook Island had seen his like and heard the same sort of tale times out of number before. Indeed, they had already known three men who had all claimed to be sons of the same individual. Consequently they were sceptical. Still, it was considered the correct thing to chaff Gabriel on

DECEMBER  
the  
new  
cons  
audi  
L  
had  
he d  
enter  
of th  
indif  
been  
Man  
thoug  
they  
mirth  
victim  
round  
Casey  
who  
truste  
and v  
the i  
would  
—tha  
'Frisco  
had  
the p  
necess  
most  
On  
was  
his f  
fond  
ticular  
pearlin  
who, l  
ship i  
ment,  
Gabrie  
do a  
nothin  
of the  
He w  
obtain  
his fav  
had v  
time,  
never  
for hi  
opens,  
serious  
door;  
cured,  
stricke  
plainly

the subject, and any man who could devise a new practical joke to play off on him might consider himself assured of an appreciative audience.

Little by little the man, for whom the crowd had been waiting, came closer to the hotel. As he drew up at the veranda-steps and prepared to enter the building a change came over the faces of those who remained to watch, and a look of indifference to his presence succeeded what had been pleasurable anticipation a moment before. Many, however, were so overcome by the thought of the fun that was to follow, that they had to retire from view and indulge their mirth where there would be no chance of the victim taking alarm at it. Word had gone round the settlement that afternoon that Judge Casey (a renegade lawyer from the Pacific slope, who had fled to escape a charge of fraudulent trusteeship about to be preferred against him, and who had now settled down as the bully of the island) had prepared a glorious joke, and would play it off on Gabriel during the evening—that is to say, as soon as the schooner from 'Frisco arrived and was at anchor. The joke had been concocted some time before, and as the presence of the vessel in question was necessary to its success, her arrival had been most anxiously awaited by those in the secret.

On this particular evening, however, Gabriel was not feeling cheerful. It was one of his few redeeming points to be passionately fond of children, and of one little girl in particular. This little one was the only child of a pearling skipper's widow, a consumptive woman who, being too poor to rent a house in the township itself, lived in a hut just outside the settlement, within a stone's-throw of the spot where Gabriel himself resided. When he would not do a hand's-turn to help himself, he thought nothing of officiating as nurse and taking charge of the baby all through the hot summer days. He would walk miles through the bush to obtain a flower or a bright-coloured pebble for his favourite, and on more than one occasion he had worked ten hours a day, for days at a time, repairing the thatch of the hut, and had never asked or expected a sixpence in return for his trouble. A few days before this story opens, however, the little one had been taken seriously ill, and now lay almost at death's door; unless certain articles of diet were procured, all of them far beyond the poverty-stricken widow's means, the Doctor had said, as plainly as words could speak, that there was

no hope of saving the baby's life. Gabriel, who, though heir to millions, as he repeatedly informed his friends, had not a halfpenny to bless himself with and no immediate prospect of being able to raise one, had been called in to assist; and he had just left the agonised widow, promising to return without fail in an hour's time with the articles that were so urgently required. He was a sleepy sort of fellow, and not good for very much, but in his heart there was the knowledge that his play-fellow's little life depended on him, and him alone. Therefore it behoved him to procure the articles in question, either with money or fair words, and to return to the hut with all possible speed. Small wonder, therefore, that when he reached the hotel, which was also the principal store of the settlement, he was not in the humour for anything in the shape of a practical joke.

Entering the bar, he was accosted by the skipper of the San Francisco schooner, who held out his hand, and asked him, with a pretence of seriousness, how he did and what sort of luck he had experienced since last they had met. Contrary to his custom, Gabriel offered a laboured reply. His heart was too full of anxiety, and his brain too busy picturing that little maid lying sick unto death in the hut in the bush, to be able to jest in his usual fashion.

Having disposed of his questioner, he passed on to the counter, where the landlord was busily engaged dispensing drinks. Besides being the principal publican and storekeeper of the island, the latter was also the postmaster, and it was from him that Gabriel obtained such letters as any one ever thought fit to write to him.

On this occasion, however, he was destined to experience a disappointment; he was informed that there was nothing for him. But it was noticeable that when he had answered his inquiry the landlord turned to the shelf behind him and seemed for some moments to be occupied in a contemplation of the various bottles with which it was decorated. It may have been that he desired to arrange his countenance before he faced his interrogator again. At any rate when he did so it was as devoid of expression as a human physiognomy could well be.

'That reminds me, Gabriel,' he said after a momentary pause, during which he drew the cork of a lager-beer bottle, 'there was a man from 'Frisco inquiring for you here a while back. He came ashore from the schooner, and said he wanted to see you to-night on

important business. I don't know where he is now, but I reckon Captain Block, sitting over yonder, can put you on the right track, if you ask him.'

It was plain that the significance of his words was not lost on his hearer, for Gabriel suddenly turned pale and clutched at the counter before him.

'Some one wanting to see me?' he said slowly and paused for a moment; adding, as if to himself: 'Well, I reckon it's come at last. And according to the way things are going now, I am glad it didn't happen before. If it had I guess I'd have cleared out of this place long since; then ther'd ha' been nobody to look after little Hetty out yonder. Now, God be praised, she'll want for nothing. I'll take her and her mother away with me, and she shall have the best doctors the States can find. Heaven above us, there never was such luck as that it should have come to-night!'

He paused in his reflections, and turned to the landlord. 'You mustn't think me a softy,' he said; 'but there's a little maid who's mortal fond of me—Gubbins's girl, you know—and the Doctor says unless she can have these things to-night' (here he pulled out a slip of paper from his pocket and pushed it across the counter), 'he reckons she'll not get through another four-and-twenty hours. Well, you know what I've always told you, that I'm the son of Millionaire Dollman of Chicago city. It's plain that he's passed in his checks, and now, as far as I can see, I'm worth close on fifty million dollars, and, if money can do it, I reckon that baby will be saved.'

His feelings must have overcome him, for he picked up the end of the handkerchief that was twisted round his neck, and wiped his eyes with it. A more pathetic figure could scarcely have been imagined, and the effect his words had upon the landlord was equally peculiar. He gave a strange sort of grunt as he turned away; and a sharp listener might have overheard him say to himself, under his breath: 'Well, if I'd have known it, I'll be d—d if I'd have anything to do with it. It's a cussed shame, that's what it is!'

What he would have said further it is difficult to tell, for at that moment a man pushed open the door leading into the front veranda, entered the bar, and approached the counter. That he was not an inhabitant of the island was plainly to be seen. In spite of the heat of the evening, he was dressed entirely in black,

wore a black frock-coat, and his head, wonderful as it may seem, was crowned with a black top-hat. In addition to a pair of black spectacles, he had a long black beard; black gloves covered his hands; and though not a drop of rain had fallen for upwards of two months, he carried in his right hand no less a thing than a black umbrella.

Accosting the landlord, who at the time was busily engaged serving a crowd which seemed to comprise half the white population of the island, he ordered a glass of port, and when this had been poured out for him, proceeded to sip it slowly. Meanwhile every eye in the room was turned in his direction.

'Landlord,' he said at length, with a somewhat affected utterance, 'earlier this evening I inquired from you the address of Mr Gabriel Dollman. I fear I must have misunderstood the directions you were kind enough to give me, for though I have made a somewhat lengthy excursion into the interior of your most picturesque island, I have had the misfortune not to have been able to discover the residence of the gentleman in question.'

Whether it was the redundancy of his language or the bitter sarcasm contained in the latter part of his speech I cannot say, but a titter ran through the room. Those, however, who looked at Gabriel noticed that he had drawn himself up with a new air. It was impossible for them to realise what was passing in his mind, or to understand that the possession of forty million dollars is sufficient to change even the most commonplace individual into a very different sort of person in a very short space of time. Putting down the glass he held in his hand, Gabriel turned and made his way along the counter towards the man who had inquired after him.

'You were inquiring for Gabriel Dollman,' he said, a little nervously. 'That is my name. What is your business?'

The new-comer glanced at him, at first rather suspiciously, and then, having recovered his presence of mind, held out his hand.

'You Mr Dollman?' he said. 'In that case I can only say that I am indeed proud to make your acquaintance, sir. When I remark that this is the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you, my unfamiliarity with your countenance will not appear strange to you. You do not, of course, know me. That is not to be wondered at. My name, however, will perhaps become more familiar to you when I say that



I am Nicodemus H. Dodge, of the firm of Dodge, Peters, & Dodge, Attorneys-at-law, of Chicago City, U.S.A. Your late lamented father, Erasmus Dollman, millionaire, was one of our most esteemed and valued clients.'

He paused to see how Gabriel would receive his news. But the other only continued to stare at him.

'My late father?' he said at length. 'He is dead, then?'

'He passed away from our midst six weeks ago,' said Mr Dodge, wiping his eyes with the extreme corner of a very dirty pocket-handkerchief, 'and I am here to inform you that by his will you inherit all his magnificent property, ranches in Texas and in Arizona; town lots in San Francisco, Baltimore, Chicago, and New York; railroad stock to the value of more than five millions, and close upon ten million sterling in hard cash. If you will allow me to do so, I will congratulate you, my dear sir. I congratulate you with my whole heart and soul, and shall be pleased to act for you in any way you may desire.'

He paused for a moment, expecting that Gabriel would say something, but he was disappointed. The latter was clutching at the counter, deathly pale, and visibly fighting hard to control himself. When he did he turned upon the attorney almost fiercely.

'I reckon you've come only just in time,' he said. 'Only just in time. I've a little friend who trembles on the verge of death. There are things to be obtained for her, and I must have money. Twenty-four hours later and you might have been too late to save her. I'll trouble you for the loan of five dollars.'

This request evidently came as a surprise to the attorney, and he allowed it to be seen that he was disconcerted. However, he recovered his presence of mind with admirable quickness, before the other had noticed his confusion, and, smiling blandly, replied:

'In due course, my dear sir; in due course. Where should we be if we did not attend to the formalities in such matters of business as these? I have here a little paper, to which I shall be glad if you will affix your signature. When that is done I shall, as I said before, be only too glad to serve you in any way you may direct, and to the very best of my ability.'

So saying, he drew from his pocket a carefully folded sheet of blue paper, which he opened and spread upon the counter for the other's perusal. As Gabriel leant over it—for he was

too short-sighted to be able to read anything very distinctly that was not placed close under his nose—the crowd, which had been watching him all the time with expressions of amused expectation upon their faces, drew closer and, looking over his shoulder, endeavoured to read what was written thereon.

A moment later the man stood upright once more. He looked round him with a confused air; then he folded the paper up as it had been given to him, and smoothed the edges with his long thin fingers.

Even now he did not seem to be able to make head or tail of it, but he was to learn the trick that was being played upon him without loss of time. Removing his coloured spectacles and the long black beard which had lent such an air of respectability to his face, the supposed attorney from the United States gave utterance to a shrill whoop of triumph, and revealed to his victim's astonished gaze the countenance of Judge Casey, the man I have already described as the disbarred attorney and bully of the island. The laughter and noise which followed his declaration may be better imagined than described. For a few moments the bar was a pandemonium. Every one laughed, and every one attempted to speak at once. Gabriel alone of those present seemed to have failed to appreciate the joke. Passing through his tormentors with simple dignity and without a word of reproach, he went quietly from the room, across the veranda, and down the steps into the moonlit night outside.

Scarcely heeding which way he walked, he crossed the road and made his way towards the beach. Once there, he seated himself on the sand and tried to think. It would naturally be difficult for a man who a moment before had understood himself to be worth no less a sum than forty million dollars to realise that he is literally without a penny in the world. Had it not been for the jeers, which were still ringing in his ears, he might have believed that he had not been near the 'Pearler's Rest' at all, but had gone to sleep on the sands and had dreamt the whole thing. But the laughter, which he could still hear, told him how detestably real it was. The tiny wavelets rippling at his feet, and the booming of the surf upon the coral reef outside, seemed to echo the scorn. Twenty minutes had now elapsed since he had left the house where the sick child lay, and he had promised to bring back the things the Doctor had ordered within an hour at the latest. What would they think of him if he did not return?

But how could he do so empty-handed? Now that his fortune had vanished and his pockets were destitute of even a copper-piece, he could not imagine how he was going to obtain what he wanted. He required upwards of five dollars, and, as he very well knew, there was not a storekeeper in the place who would dream of giving him credit to that extent. What, therefore, was to be done? It was fully ten minutes before a notion struck him. He had gone over the extent of his worldly possessions, and had convinced himself that he had nothing at all to sell—at least nothing that any one would care to buy. Then an idea occurred to him, and he sprang to his feet. Leaving the beach, he made his way up the road from the jetty to the main street of the little settlement without loss of time. After the cruel hoax which had been practised upon him half-an-hour before, it would have been impossible for him to try and raise a loan on the strength of his paternal inheritance. Indeed, since they so plainly doubted it, he would not have done so even had it been possible. Now he had something in his mind which, if one other person were still in the same way of thinking as he had been some months before, would give him nearly three times the amount he required. He smiled as the idea suggested itself, and then quickened his steps along the sandy track until he reached the house he wanted. It was the residence of the Doctor, the man who was attending the child to whom he was so devotedly attached.

Of all the human derelicts whom the ocean of Fate had washed up on to the shores of Hornibrook Island, there was scarcely one so extraordinary as the individual I am about to introduce to you. He was an Englishman of middle age, a tall, handsome man, almost soldierly in his carriage, and with an abrupt, sharp manner of speaking that seemed to bear out the suggestion just implied. It was in his association with his fellow-men on the island, however, that he gave evidence of the greatest singularity. He had no friends whatsoever, nor, indeed, any acquaintances, even in the most meagre acceptation of the word. He was never seen in the 'Pearler's Rest,' or any of the grog-shanties, save in the practice of his profession, and it is doubtful whether he even knew the names, or the nicknames, of those he was called in to attend. His house was built in the ordinary fashion of the southern seas—that is to say, with a broad veranda running completely round it. Here he lived, entirely alone, his only company being

his books, of which he possessed a library containing more works than had probably ever been seen or heard of by half the inhabitants of the island.

Ascending the steps which led to the veranda, Gabriel coughed by way of attracting attention, and then seeing the medico seated as usual at his table, surrounded by his books, he plucked up courage and, in answer to the other's invitation, entered the room. It was plain that the Doctor was surprised to see him.

'What is the matter?' he asked. 'What brings you here?'

Gabriel stood before him, holding his hat in his hand and playing nervously with the brim. He had a request to make, but he scarcely knew with what words to clothe it. The pause was a long and an awkward one, and it was the Doctor who spoke first.

'Come, come, my man,' he said, 'can't you see that you are interrupting me? If you've got anything to say, I should be glad if you would say it and begone, for I am busy. What is the matter?'

'I am in want of money,' said Gabriel shortly. 'There is nobody else I can get it from, and I must have it to-night—now, within a few minutes, or it will be too late.'

'Well?'

'I thought I would come to you. Six months ago you made me an offer, when you thought I was going to die. I wouldn't listen to you. You offered me three pounds; say five now, and I'll agree.'

The Doctor stared at him for a few moments, running his eye over the other's peculiar figure with that quick, searching look peculiar to him.

'Do you mean it?' he inquired, as he took up a pen and drew a sheet of notepaper towards him. 'Remember, last time you scouted the idea.'

'I mean it now,' Gabriel said. 'I don't know that it is much use to me—at least it won't be then. At any rate I'll chance it. Give me five pounds now and you can do what you like when I'm gone.'

The Doctor began to write, and as soon as he had finished pushed the paper across the table and made the other sign it. When he had done so he counted out five sovereigns, and placed them in a shining heap upon the corner of the table.

'There is your money,' he said. 'Take it and be off. If you're going to drink it, as I suppose you will do, I shall come into my

property even sooner than I expect. I don't know, however, that I've done wisely. Five pounds is a pretty high price to pay for such an experiment.'

'I am not going to drink it,' said Gabriel quickly.

'Then what do you intend doing with it?' the other inquired carelessly.

'You ordered things for Gubbins's little girl,' he said. 'Mrs Gubbins hasn't a red cent to bless herself with, and if somebody doesn't get the things for her the child will die.'

'And you've sold yourself in order that the brat may live!' cried the Doctor, surprised in spite of himself. 'These are the days of chivalry indeed. Well, that will do. I'm rather sick of philanthropy, so you had better be off. I'll look round and see the youngster in the morning.'

Gabriel appropriated the gold and placed it in his pocket; then, taking up his hat, he bade the Doctor good-night, and set off with all speed in the direction of the 'Pearler's Rest' once more. Ten minutes later he had made his purchases, and was returning to the lonely hut occupied by Mrs Gubbins and her child. What the widow said to him by way of thanks it is no business of this narrative to divulge, but one thing is very certain—from that hour the child began to improve.

At the end of a fortnight, and by the time the money he had raised had dwindled down to the insignificant sum of half-a-crown, the baby was able to run about as usual, and Gabriel Dollman's heart was at peace once more.

Ever since that terrible night when the cruel practical joke had been so publicly played upon him, he had kept aloof as far as possible from the inhabitants of the settlement. He had no desire to be a further butt for their wit, and though he was not intellectually as bright as some of the keener spirits among them considered themselves, he had more than enough sense to see that, for the reason that he had so calmly endured the insult they had put upon him, he had sunk still lower in their estimation. With the children of the settlement, however, it was quite a different matter. However much their elders might despise him, the little ones did not share their opinion. Almost without exception they were his friends, and by some sort of contrariness appreciated him at his full value. Where their elders could only see a butt for senseless practical jokes and a person upon whom to exercise their petty tyranny,

the children saw a man full of affection and possessed of a fascination second to none. It was Gabriel who taught them to swim in the rocky pools; it was Gabriel who showed them where the different jungle fowl made their nests, who found for them marvellous beetles and butterflies, who knew the best fishing-places, and who could tell the most wonderful fairy stories ever yet listened to by the children of mortal man.

Scarcely a day passed but his hut was besieged by the little ones, and more than once they had constituted themselves his champions when the tide of public opinion had set hard and fast against him. But this was only for the present; a time was coming when the inhabitants of the island were to see him in a new and very unexpected light, and were to learn to appreciate him at his true value.

One never-to-be-forgotten Saturday, three months to a day after that memorable scene in the 'Pearler's Rest,' a schooner put into the lagoon and came to an anchor. She brought with her three Kanakas, whom she had picked up out of an open boat, a degree south of the island. They formed part of the crew of the schooner *Jessie Boyle*. The remainder, having failed to get off, had gone to the bottom with their vessel. They were landed, and next morning at daybreak the vessel passed out of the lagoon and went on her way, leaving a legacy of death behind her. Two days later one of the new-comers developed a sudden and mysterious illness, and within a few hours the man with whom he was lodging followed suit. Twenty-four hours later yet another was taken ill, and then the news got about that the Doctor had declared the disease to be smallpox.

Now, any one who has had experience of those bewitching islands south of the Equator knows what a veritable hell they can become when this dread disease, the one of all others most feared, gets a firm hold upon them. Hornibrook Island proved to be no exception to the rule. The first three cases, already described, soon multiplied into upwards of a dozen, and by the time the number had reached twenty the terror and consternation of the inhabitants may be better imagined than described. Faces which had never been known to blanch at the darkest deeds of violence were now white as cere-cloths when the news came in that yet another and another companion had caught the infection and was not expected to recover. The 'Pearler's Rest' was no longer the rendezvous

of the inhabitants; no longer were the billiard saloons and gambling hells visited by their previous patrons. Men were afraid to meet and mix with each other, lest they too should be stricken down by the pestilence which walked at noonday and carried everything before it. Some put to sea in their luggers, and the boats were found by other vessels, weeks afterwards, with only putrefying corpses on board; others fled into the bush, and were either lost or carried the contagion to the natives; while more, mad with terror, shut themselves in their houses, and refused to come forth until they were compelled to do so by sheer starvation and that strange pluck which is the outcome of despair. At first there were many funerals, conducted, if not with decorum, at least with despatch. Later on, however, these ceased, not from any ignorance of the danger to those who were left, by permitting the bodies to remain unburied, but because there was not one single soul to be found who would undertake the task with its attendant risk. Then, on one never-to-be-forgotten day, the panic reached its climax, and all those who retained possession of their health quitted the township in a body and established themselves upon the hillside overlooking the sea, leaving the sick behind them to take care of themselves as best they might.

On the day that this terrible thing happened, and when men, women, and children were to be seen making their way up the hillside, carrying as many of their belongings with them as was possible under the circumstances, it chanced that Gabriel Dollman, who had been indisposed for some days, left his hut and went into the settlement to procure his weekly supply of provisions. He had heard nothing of the trouble that had occurred, and in consequence was dreading the reception he would receive; but when he entered the main street and found it empty he knew not what to think.

Glancing into one of the billiard saloons, a place of call that seldom had a table unoccupied when the pearly fleets were in harbour, he found it empty. The balls lay about just as they had been left, and, to add to the air of desolation, a large fungus was growing in the centre of the green cloth. Thence he passed on to the 'Pearler's Rest.' The bar, where he had so often been the subject of derisive laughter, was also empty, and in the room behind it the hotel-keeper himself lay stretched upon the sofa, dying. By his side was the

Doctor, cold and impassive as of yore, but nurse or attendant he had none. Realising that at last all was over, and that in this case, as in so many others, there was no further work for him to do, the latter left the room and passed into the bar, closing the door behind him. Making his way to a certain shelf, he took down a bottle of whisky, and procuring a couple of glasses from beneath the counter, poured some of the spirit into them, and invited Gabriel, with a look, to join him.

'What are you doing here?' he inquired when he had emptied his glass and placed it upon the counter. 'Why have you not run away like those other frightened curs? Don't you know that this place is a regular death-trap, and that before you can turn round you may be qualifying for the cemetery yourself?'

Gabriel sheepishly admitted that he had not thought about it, and added that he was not afraid of infection. He said that he had heard somewhere that when you do not feel any fear there is not much danger. The Doctor grunted scornfully.

'If being afraid could induce an attack, there ought not to be a man alive on that hillside at this moment! The cowards! They cleared out of this place like rats from a sinking ship, leaving their friends to sink or swim. Badly as I have always thought of my fellow-men, I don't know that I ever despised them quite so thoroughly as I do now. If one of them had only stood by me I might have done something. As it is, I've got to make what sort of fight of it I can by myself, and, by Jove! it's a harder struggle than any one would imagine.'

They looked at each other for some seconds. After that a silence fell upon them which lasted while a man might have counted fifty. Then Gabriel said slowly and with a little nervousness that was born of the laughter that had been his portion in bygone days:

'Why not try me? I am willing to do my best, and if you are not afraid to run the risk, we might do something.'

The Doctor held out his hand, and for a moment there was almost a gleam of friendliness in his eyes.

'You're a man, Gabriel Dollman,' he said, 'and not a rat. If you're willing to try your hand I'll accept your offer. Do the best you can, and we'll show those beggars up yonder what the two people they have been accustomed to scoff at are worth. They call me the Mad Doctor, I remember.'

Th  
nurse.  
narrate  
the se  
were  
plans  
alread  
genial  
be bet  
living.  
Onl  
laziest  
on the  
and c  
dange  
that I  
Nothi  
know  
stand  
was li  
worn  
strain  
sat do  
Provi  
pecte  
admir  
In  
toiled  
side,  
in th  
cheer  
they  
and  
finish  
eyes  
behin  
had  
meag  
sever  
ing  
sense  
comm  
and  
vagal  
to a  
capal  
not  
being  
a gr  
could  
At  
ment  
sett  
num  
the f



Thus Gabriel Dollman was installed as head-nurse. Within an hour of the conversation just narrated he had accompanied the Doctor through the settlement, had marked the houses which were appointed for destruction, had made his plans for burying the unfortunates who had already succumbed, and was carrying cheery, genial sympathy and promises that they would be better in the morning to those who were still living.

Only a few hours before he had been the laziest and in many ways the most useless man on the island. Now he was the hardest-worked and certainly the most willing. Thought of danger he had none, and it was soon apparent that he did not know the meaning of fatigue. Nothing seemed to tire him. He picked up a knowledge of his duties and came to understand what was required of him in a way that was little short of marvellous, until the Doctor, worn almost to death with anxiety and the strain under which he was labouring, could have sat down and cried out in very thankfulness to Providence for having sent him such an unexpected, and at the same time such an entirely admirable, assistant.

In this fashion, for upwards of a month, they toiled on. As fresh cases developed on the hillside, they were brought down and attended to in the *Inferno* below. Those who died were cheered in their last moments by the man whom they had once so cruelly laughed at and abused, and when all was over and the struggle was finished, it was he who reverently closed their eyes and laid them to rest in the cemetery behind the town. More than once the Doctor had thought it impossible that his companion's meagre constitution could stand the strain, and several times he had been on the point of ordering him to desist from his labours. But the sense of responsibility, that is stronger than any command, had settled itself upon Gabriel hard and fast, and he was no longer the shiftless vagabond he had once been, but a man willing to attempt great deeds, and, what is more, capable of accomplishing them. Though he did not think of such a thing, his enemies were being given into his hand, and he was having a greater vengeance vouchsafed him than he could ever have expected or desired.

At last, however, some faint sign of improvement began to show itself in the fever-stricken settlement. There was a steady decrease in the number of cases, and in such as still remained, the force of the plague seemed in a great measure

to have abated. Strangely enough, the last case of a really serious nature was none other than the man Casey, the originator and perpetrator of the cruel hoax practised upon Gabriel really only a few months, but which now seemed so many years, ago. It was on the twenty-eighth morning after the latter had volunteered to assist the Doctor in his work that they saw the red flag, the prearranged signal that there was another case awaiting their kind consideration. Accordingly they lost no time in ascending to the plateau, where it was their custom to receive and take charge of the patients demanding their care. This particular case, however, was destined to prove a more than usually stubborn one. Day after day, with a patience that nothing could have exceeded, Gabriel did his duty by the sick man's bedside, watching and waiting for the sign that would tell him the corner was turned, and that his patient was on the high-road towards recovery. The Doctor himself came and went with his usual taciturnity. He gave his commands in the same sharp style, saw that they were obeyed to the letter, and all the time wondered what it could be in his coadjutor's constitution that made him able to forgive his enemies in this marvellous fashion.

The same afternoon that the patient was declared out of danger the Doctor burst in upon his assistant with the news that a vessel had passed the passage in the reef and had entered the lagoon. Acting on his instructions, Gabriel went down to the beach, launched a boat, and pulled out to her. For reasons of his own he did not pull alongside, but remained about three boats'-lengths away, and hailed her thence.

'What is the matter ashore?' inquired the mate from the taffrail. 'The place looks deserted.'

'Smallpox,' answered the other laconically. 'We've lost half the number of our mess through it. Don't you come ashore if you're afraid. The graveyard's full enough already. What do you want?'

'We've a passenger aboard who is anxious to land here for an hour or two,' answered the officer. 'He wants to make inquiries about a man who, so he has been told, is living here. There's no telling but what he may be dead of this 'ere blessed disease.'

'What's his name?' inquired Gabriel. 'I've nursed the biggest part of the folk who've been ill, all those who died I've buried with my own

hands, and those who got well again I've helped up the hillside to their friends.'

At this juncture a short, sandy-haired man, clean-shaven and dressed in a suit of white flannel, appeared at the rail, and, after a short conversation with the mate, in his turn hailed Gabriel.

'My name is Pryce,' he said. 'I am an attorney-at-law from Chicago, and I have travelled in this vessel from San Francisco in the hopes of ascertaining the whereabouts of a Mr Gabriel Dollman, who was reported to be living on this island.'

Gabriel's surprise was so great that for a moment he could not find breath enough to reply. When he did he brought his boat a little closer to the vessel, and funnelling his mouth with his hands, as if he feared some of his old oppressors on the hillside would hear him, answered that he was none other than the individual in question.

'You Gabriel Dollman, son of Millionaire Dollman of Chicago?' cried the other in astonishment. 'It can't be possible. Surely you're making game of me?'

'Why should I be?' asked Gabriel. 'I reckon it is not only possible, but it's true. There's the Doctor ashore there and half a hundred others who'll swear to my identity. If you don't believe me, come ashore yourself and find out.'

But this, it appeared, the attorney was not willing to do. And after the gruesome account the other had given of that plague-stricken spot, it is not to be wondered at that he persisted in his refusal.

'Well, never mind,' said Gabriel. 'I guess it'll be all right. I can bring the Doctor off to see you, and when he gets his eye fixed on you I guess you'll believe what he says, if you won't believe me. Now what is it you've got to tell me?'

It was plain that the man did not altogether doubt the sincerity of what Gabriel told him, for when he next spoke it was with an air of respect, that had been conspicuously lacking before.

'If you are Mr Dollman, as you say,' he replied, 'I may as well warn you to be prepared for some bad news. Your father is dead, sir. He was killed in a railroad accident, and in consequence his entire property passes to you, as his sole heir. Provided, therefore, you can establish your identity to my satisfaction, I think I may congratulate you upon the posses-

sion of one of the finest incomes in the world. You will be worth from between forty to fifty million dollars, if a cent. But before I do anything further, I must be satisfied that you are the man you declare yourself to be.'

Gabriel thought for a moment. He did not see how he was to do this without letting the whole settlement into his secret.

'This vessel is *The Pride of the Golden Gate*, is it not?' he inquired.

'That is so,' said the mate. 'I reckon the owners know it.'

'I reckon they do,' returned Gabriel. 'And her captain's name is——?'

'Brown,' replied the mate. 'Horatio W. Brown. He's been in this trade long enough to be remembered.'

'Horry Brown—why, he knows me well enough,' said Gabriel. 'Fetch him up and let's see.'

Captain Brown was accordingly brought up from below. Nobody asked him any questions, nor was there any need for them, for when he walked to the taffrail he saw the man in the boat, and called out:

'Hullo, Gabriel Dollman! What are you doing out here?'

'That's good enough for me,' replied the lawyer. 'If Captain Brown is convinced that you are Gabriel Dollman, I think I may take your word that it is so.'

'Of course he's Gabriel Dollman,' said the skipper. 'I've known him these five years past. Everybody ashore knows him too; he's one of the characters of the island.'

'That may be. But I'm anxious to be certain.'

Dollman put his hand in his breast-pocket and drew out a packet of letters he had brought with him from the hut. These he handed up to the man at the rail, who took them gingerly enough and glanced through them.

'I'm quite satisfied, Mr Dollman,' he said at last, 'and I think I may congratulate you on your accession to your fortune; and if you will draw a little closer I will hand you the papers I have brought for you. I've got them in my pocket now. There is a sum sufficient for current expenses to be paid to you as soon as you please, and I am also instructed by my firm to inform you that they will be pleased to honour your drafts up to any amount you may like to name.'

If one might have judged from appearances, the heir was neither as pleased nor as astonished

as one might have expected him to be. He received the news very quietly, but a sharp observer would have noticed that he glanced involuntarily up at the hillside where what remained of the inhabitants of the settlement were encamped. Then he turned once more to the man on the deck above him.

'I have been expecting this for some time past,' he said simply. 'But it comes upon me as rather a shock.'

'Of course it does, sir,' replied the lawyer respectfully. 'But, bless you, you'll soon get used to it.'

Half-an-hour later Gabriel was making his way ashore, but this time in a very different capacity. He had put off to the vessel a ragged scarecrow of a man, ignorant that he was the possessor of a single sixpence in the world. Now he was returning one of the richest men in the whole scheme of the universe. He did not think of it, but had he done so he would probably have found it difficult to reconcile the fact that his toes were sticking out of his boots with the knowledge that he was the possessor of vast tracts of country in the state of Texas, of whole streets in San Francisco, to say nothing of half-a-dozen other large American cities; or that he was the principal stockholder in more than a dozen of the large railway companies, and a man who had many millions to his credit at his bank.

As he beached his boat he saw that the schooner was weighing anchor once more, and he knew that she was being frightened away by the pestilence which had so devastated the island. Now, unless he, himself, informed his friends ashore, it would be impossible for them to find out that the story which he had so often told them, and which they had always ridiculed as a creation of his fancy, was true after all. He made up his mind before he reached the main street that he would not let them into his secret. It would be time enough for them to know it when the schooner returned, a month later, according to arrangement, to pick him up. Then he would have his hour of triumph. In the meantime he was going to proceed with his work as if nothing had occurred, fortified, however, with the knowledge that he had sufficient capital at his back, without touching a single cent of his investments, to buy up every man, woman, and child upon the island half-a-dozen times over, should he desire to do so. There was a pleasant consciousness about this fact that must have betrayed itself in his face as he

entered the hut where the Doctor was sitting by the bedside of Judge Casey, the man who had caused him to be laughed at so many months before.

'Well, what news had she for us?' inquired the Doctor. 'I see she's clearing out again.'

'They're frightened,' replied Gabriel. 'Captain Brown says he'll be back again in a month's time to see how we're getting on; but he declared he wouldn't stay now, not if he was paid by the minute to do so.'

Gabriel could scarcely repress a chuckle as he reflected that now it would be even possible for him to make such a bargain with the captain. It gave him a feeling of exhilaration to know that, if he desired to do so, he could retain this vessel day after day, and not for a moment feel any strain upon his finances.

That night, when every one else was in bed, he sat alone with his old enemy. The man was terribly weak, and a great deal more dependent upon his nurse than he cared to admit.

'I wonder what's going to be the end of all this,' he said, half to himself and half to Gabriel. 'They tell me that you and the Doctor between you have burnt half the township down, and without asking a living soul's permission.'

'It had to be done, Judge,' said Gabriel solemnly. 'There was nothing else for it. There was infection in every building, and if we'd left them standing for folks to go back to when the plague's died out, why, we'd have had it back with us again before we could have looked round.'

'Well, I don't know that I'm sorry mine's gone,' said the Judge. 'As soon as I am fit to get about again I guess I'll clear out and try my luck elsewhere. Hornibrook Island ain't fitted for my constitution, I reckon. I've never done any good since I've been here.'

He gave a heavy sigh, and then lapsed into silence again. After that, more for the sake of saying something than for any desire of conversation, the other inquired where he thought of going.

'How should I know?' replied the Judge. 'I'd like to fetch up in the States, but that ain't possible. I've got a wife and three kids in Maine that I haven't seen for close upon ten years.'

'Why not?' inquired Gabriel.

'Because I can't go back there,' said the Judge in a burst of confidence that was quite unusual to him. 'There's a certain party that

wants me to the tune of five thousand dollars, and until I can square up with him I daren't show my face there. But it's come pretty rough on me, all things considered; for I was mortal fond of those kids, and the missus, I know, would fetch out the pie when she saw me coming up the street. I'm not an easy sort of fellow to run in double harness with, but there's one thing I can say, and that is true—I never had trouble with her. Take it from me, Gabriel, if you don't think you can quite pull it off with a woman, don't you marry her. Life's not long enough for that sort of hell.'

Gabriel, who was simplicity itself, promised he would be sure not to do so, and then they both lapsed into silence again. This lasted for upwards of a quarter of an hour, and during the time Gabriel busied himself with certain necessary house-work, frowning and winking to himself prodigiously meanwhile, as if he were arguing the pros and cons of some weighty problem. Finally he returned to the bedside.

'Supposing somebody was to hand you ten thousand dollars as a present, Judge,' he said; 'do you reckon you'd be able to pay up that money and get back to your wife in Maine?'

'Just try me,' said the Judge. 'Try me once; that's all I ask. But there's no such luck coming my way. Who's going to give me ten thousand dollars, I should like to know?'

Gabriel sank his voice a little before he answered.

'If nobody else will do it, I guess I will,' he said. 'Haven't I told you before this that there's money coming to me? When it gets here I'll pay your passage home and set you going again.'

An expression of anger flashed across the sick man's face.

'Don't you say it, Gabriel,' he cried imperatively. 'Don't you try to play it on me that way. I can't have it. You've not been a bad sort of a fellow to me since I've been ill, and I don't want to have to say nasty things about you, but if you get trying to tell me any more about that mad-headed notion of yours that you're going to be a millionaire, why, I shall have to talk to you pretty sharp and sudden. If you'd got any sense you'd own up that it's all a lie.'

Gabriel put his hand on the pocket in which reposed the drafts and the papers he had that afternoon received—the documents which so effectually established him in his new position.

'So you still reckon it's a lie, Judge?' he said softly.

'A lie? Of course it's a lie,' returned the other. 'And nobody knows it better than yourself.'

'Oh, well, I don't say anything,' replied Gabriel, with a peculiar intonation. 'You remember that, Judge, when you come to look back on what I'm telling you now. Mind you, I don't say anything.'

When his patient was asleep later on, Gabriel obtained writing materials, and sat down to concoct a wonderful document, which he called his will. The following morning he signed this, with a great air of mystery, in the presence of a couple of convalescent patients, and for the next two or three days went about his business, whistling and chuckling to himself, and forming in his own mind vast plans for the regulation of his future life. But it was not to run quite as he had mapped it out for himself. In the early morning of the Saturday following the day upon which the schooner had arrived with the news, the Doctor was summoned to the hut where the man who had been his right hand through this terrible crisis had installed himself. When he arrived there he discovered that what he had feared had come to pass, for Gabriel was down with the very disease from the clutches of which he had rescued so many others. Thereupon the Doctor, who was none too strong himself, sat down and wept like a child. He had worked shoulder to shoulder with the other for so many weeks, and had become so much attached to him, that to see him now captured by the enemy, just as he thought they were emerging unscathed from their terrible ordeal, was more than he could bear. Two days later Gabriel was delirious; then, by some untoward chance, he caught cold, and complications followed. Whatever the feelings of the settlement may have been before the outbreak of the pestilence, it was at least certain that the news of the man's illness affected them profoundly; for even the hardest among them knew that he owed him a debt of gratitude which nothing could ever repay. In the bitter hand-to-hand fight which was now going on with death, their gratitude, however, was of small avail. At a late hour on the following night the Doctor, who had scarcely left his patient for a moment, realised that the case was hopeless. It was partly due to his feeble constitution, and partly to the strain which the service he had rendered to others had placed upon it. At any



rate Gabriel Dollman was sinking fast. Towards dawn he rallied a little and called the Doctor to his side.

'Doctor,' he said, 'I reckon I'm pretty close up now. Somehow I don't feel much as if I'd care to go on living, and yet, you know, in a fortnight I was going home—home again to the States, where I wouldn't be old Gabriel Dollman, the fool of Hornibrook Island, any more, but just Millionaire Dollman of Chicago city.'

'Hush, hush!' said the Doctor, thinking the other was lapsing into delirium again. 'Lie still and try to get some sleep.'

'Why should I?' asked Gabriel. 'I'll have enough sleep directly, I reckon. I want to talk to you while I've got the chance. Put your hand under my pillow and you'll feel some papers. I want you to take charge of them. One is the will I've made. You'll see that I've named you as my executor, and I guess I know you well enough by this time to feel sure you'll carry it all out just as I wish.'

Seeing the man's condition, the Doctor did as he was directed without a word, whereupon Gabriel laid himself down on his pillow again and fell asleep. Two hours later, and even sooner than the other had expected, the end came, and the soul of the man who had given his life to save others departed from him, bound for a land where his good and evil deeds would be weighed in a just and righteous balance.

After the funeral the Doctor went into his own house and sat down among his books. With a choking feeling in his throat that was not often there, he took the papers the dead

man had given him from the place where they had been put to fumigate, spread them on the table before him, and prepared to examine them with what he tried to make himself believe was a cynical smile. He expected to find an incoherent jumble, but as he read a different expression came into his face.

'Why, what's this?' he cried at last, bringing his fist down with a thump upon the table, and then gluing his eyes to the page once more. 'Good heavens! What blind bats we have been! If these papers are correct—and there seems no reason to doubt them—the man was not mad after all, but was what he pretended to be, and what we would never believe him—a millionaire. By his will he's left enough money to every white man and woman on this island—even to those who bullied and scorned him most—to rebuild their houses, and to start in the world afresh. One hundred thousand dollars he bequeaths to his friend the Doctor in remembrance of the goodwill he bore him, and the remainder of his property he leaves in trust for Hetty Mary Gubbins, daughter of Martha Gubbins, widow, of Hornibrook Island. Three thousand dollars are to be paid to her mother yearly for her maintenance and education, and the balance is to be placed in trust for her until she shall have attained the age of twenty-one years.'

Then the Doctor, who saw the chance of a new life rising before his mind's eye, a life in which the old should be forgotten, rose from his chair, and when he stood erect, said solemnly: 'God bless the Millionaire of Hornibrook Island!'



# WITNESS TO THE MARRIAGE.

By W. E. CULE.

## CHAPTER I

**F**OR some time the conversation had declined. Morden seemed to be taking an absent interest in his cigar-smoke, and I had picked up one of the papers with which the table was littered. It was that morning's *Standard*.

'What are you trying to remember?'

The question startled me by its suddenness. I had been reading an advertisement which had chanced to catch my eye, but when I looked up I found Morden regarding me curiously.

'It is this notice,' I replied, passing the paper across the table; 'the second in the column. It has not appeared previously, nor have I ever met with the names, yet when I read it I felt a strange sensation—a sensation of uncertain remembrance, if I may call it so. In fact, I could almost have declared that I had read it before.'

Morden took up the sheet and scanned the first column. 'Is this it—the Ritford marriage?' he asked carelessly.

I nodded in reply. Removing his cigar for a moment, he began to read aloud:

'A REWARD will be given to any person furnishing information with regard to the marriage of George, Lord Harriden, afterwards sixth Earl of Ritford, to Anna, daughter of Harold Thorne, Esquire, of Wrathley, in the County of Cumberland, which is supposed to have taken place in London early in the year 1790.—HODGES AND BAILEY, Solicitors, Fetter Lane.'

'Come,' said Morden, laying the paper upon the table, 'this is interesting. Do you notice the expression "supposed to have taken place"? It is very much like despair.'

I looked at him inquiringly, and he continued slowly:

'The story has been going the round in legal circles for some time, but I suppose you haven't

heard it. You men of leisure have no need to follow the papers. It appears that this Lord Harriden of the advertisement made a runaway marriage. Anna Thorne was a distant connection of the family, a poor but, of course, charming girl, who had been taken up by his lordship's mother, the Countess of Ritford. She was a kind of eighteenth-century lady's companion, and my young lord knew that his father would oppose the connection with all his might. On the other hand, the estates were strictly entailed, and there could be no cutting off with a shilling.

'He took his own way, naturally, and carried Anna to London. It was equally natural that a disturbance should follow, and he was never allowed to pass the threshold of Ritford Castle again until the Earl's death, which took place five years later. Then he returned in triumph as sixth Earl.

'So far the story is ordinary enough, but now we come to the matter of the advertisement. The seventh and eighth Earls of Ritford were son and grandson respectively of the husband of Anna Thorne, and the ninth Earl, who has recently succeeded, is his great-grandson. But on the succession of this last it happened that some legal inquiries were made in connection with certain title-deeds. Then it was discovered, to the general dismay, that no proof or record of any kind whatever could be found relating to the marriage of the sixth Earl and Anna Thorne.

'The consequence is,' resumed Morden, depositing the ash of his cigar in the tray at his elbow, 'that a younger branch of the family of Harriden puts in a claim to the title and estates, on the ground that the marriage never took place. The matter will be in the courts very shortly, and it stands thus: the present Earl is searching for proofs, and all the church registers, not only in London, but in every parish in which Lord Harriden is likely to have resided for even the

shortest period, are being thoroughly examined. Now the solicitors are advertising, as you see. It is a last resource, and a poor one at that.'

'Merely a chance,' I suggested.

'Merely a chance,' was the careless answer, 'but probably the only one left.'

I took up the paper and glanced at the advertisement again. The movement reminded Morden of the question which had brought forth his story.

'As for your fancied recollection,' he continued more thoughtfully, 'the sensation is not unusual. I believe most people experience it at some time or other. Sometimes a place which one has never visited before seems to be strangely familiar—a house, a street, or a country-road. Or it may be something you have said—directly you have spoken you feel that you have uttered the same words at some previous time under the same circumstances. There are two explanations of this. One is based on the theory of the reincarnation of the soul, and suggests that the incident really has happened before, in a previous existence, and that the sensation you experience is simply that of a faint memory. That, of course, is a matter for the psychologists.'

'And the other theory?' I asked with interest.

'The other theory is that the effect is produced by some reflex action of the brain, similar to that which produces dreams,' answered Morden. 'That is one of those rational explanations which satisfy nobody.'

I still held the paper in my hand, and now, half unconsciously, I placed a thick pencil-mark opposite the advertisement. Morden saw the action and smiled.

'By the way,' he said a moment later, 'our mention of London churches just now reminds me that you take a deep interest in brasses. Do you know St Sepulchre's Church, Tottenham?'

'No,' was my dubious reply. 'Yet I seem to have heard the name before.'

'Another soul-memory,' he suggested, with a lazy smile. 'Well, I was going to say this. St Sepulchre's is a very small and a very old church in the Norman style. Years ago, I suppose, it was a country village church, but now it is almost lost behind miles of stone and mortar. It has fallen into disuse of late years, but at last its cause is to be taken up. I was sent down there a week ago to give an estimate of the cost of renovation, and I fancy I noticed one or two very decent brasses there. It might be worth your while to go and see

them before they are renovated out of existence.'

'This is interesting,' I said, with some satisfaction. 'I shall be glad to add to my collection of brass-rubbings. My people have been antiquaries in this respect for generations; and there is a tradition that my great-grandfather had a splendid collection, which was destroyed in a big fire some eighty years ago. I should have liked to see it.'

'H'm!' said Morden half enviously as he rose to go. 'It's very nice to have a hobby, but as a rule it is only men of property who can afford it. If you were a poor architect, now—— But there, I must be off. I have to go into the country to-morrow morning.'

He chose a fresh cigar and took a light from mine. I accompanied him into the hall, and assisted him with his coat. Then we stood at the door for a few moments chatting, until the cold air reminded me that it was midwinter, and that I was coatless. Morden saw me give an involuntary shiver. 'Well, good-night,' he said briskly. 'I am keeping you out. Good-night.'

We shook hands for the second time, and I watched him as he passed quickly down the street. But when he had gone some twenty yards or so he paused and turned. His voice rang clear in the frosty December air:

'Don't forget the brasses, Balfour—St Sepulchre's, Tottenham!'

## CHAPTER II.



THE sound of footsteps ceased as the care-taker passed out of the porch. The door closed behind her with a grating, hollow sound, and I was standing alone by the old church altar.

But I had seen the brass before! As I knelt to examine it the conviction came upon me with the shock of a sudden memory. I had seen it before.

The little diamond-paned window above the altar had been broken long ago, and the damp and rain had spread over everything beneath until not only the inscription on the brass but the effigy itself was hidden by a dark discoloration. So I was gazing at a blank oblong mass, unintelligible to all until cleaned; but I knew that this was the fair memorial to Sir Thomas de Bollen, a gallant knight who died in the year 1430, at the noble age of sixty-five years. I

saw the deeply engraved figure in complete mail, girded with baldric and cross-hilted sword, the gauntleted hands crossed upon the breast, and the long, straight hair falling back upon the ringed camail. I knew, word for word, the terse Norman-French inscription, as though I had read it yesterday; yet never before had I set my foot in the church of St Sepulchre.

Had I not? As I turned to look behind me the dark little church seemed to grow strangely familiar. The paved aisle and the plain Norman arch; those old windows so quaint and narrow; the now dilapidated oaken pews, high and old-fashioned in the front; the altar near which I stood, with its brazen rail—surely I had seen them before. It was all like a returning memory of childhood—but I knew that as a child I had never been near this place!

The day was closing, and the building was very still. My slightest movement seemed to wake a whispering echo that died reluctantly away, to be followed by a deeper hush. In the failing light, darkening shadows lingered among the heavy pews, behind the massive pillars, and in the gathering gloom of the doorway. And with it all my memory seemed to halt on the brink of a recovery, seemed to be struggling to recall a faded scene, seemed to hesitate at the moment of triumph. So a man hesitates and fails when a familiar name comes upon the lips only to fall at the last instant into the unremembered.

I bowed my head upon my hands. It was coming, slowly but certainly; one moment more and I would remember—remember—remember what?

I started and looked up. The door of the church had been suddenly thrown open. There was a sound of voices without—a hollow echo of footsteps in the porch. Then, amid the darkening shadows, I saw indistinct figures mingle together at the entrance. A minute later these resolved themselves into a small group, and came directly up the aisle. They came slowly and reverently, with soft and measured tread, with the rustling of robes and the sibilant echoes of whispered words.

Even in my surprise some impulse caused me to move aside, and I passed into the shadow of a curtain, unnoticed before, which overhung a doorway on the right. Then I saw four figures pass slowly up to the altar and range themselves about it.

The light from the window fell directly upon

them. One was a tall old man, in the vestments of a priest of the church. He held an open book in his hand, and behind him stood a short figure in black, of which I saw the outline only, on account of the deep shadow.

But it was upon the two other persons of the group that I finally fixed my attention, and I was conscious of no astonishment or fear, either on account of the strangeness of the scene or the startling costumes of the actors. My feeling was simply one of intense interest in what was going on.

The third member of the group was a young man, tall and erect, dressed in the finery of a century ago. On the flaps of his coloured velvet coat I caught the glimmer of silver lace, and he wore dark knee-breeches and low buckled shoes. Beneath the skirt of a long frilled overcoat fell the scabbard of a rapier, and his powdered hair was tied back in an enormous queue.

Beside him stood a woman, who leaned heavily upon his arm. By the light from the window I saw the profile of a young girl, clear-cut and beautiful, beneath the close bonnet, with a single ringlet of golden hair falling on either cheek. She wore the long, clinging skirt which came in at the end of the last century, with the waist-girdle quaintly high. Hers was a slender, graceful form as his was a bold and courtly one, but they were figures of the old time both.

Scarcely had I become conscious of these impressions when the priest began to read, in a thin, quavering voice, from the book in his hand. The light fell upon the open page so that his face was in shadow, but I recognised the words. They formed the opening sentences of the marriage service!

I stood immovable, listening with curious eagerness while the low monotonous voice spoke on. I heard the well-known phrases, so solemn and so beautiful in their solemnity. I heard the responses, given by one of the couple in a clear, decided tone, and by the other in a sweet, faltering voice; and ever and again another voice uttered a sonorous 'Amen' from behind, where the dark figure of the old man stood in the shadow.

I saw them kneel and rise, and watched while the bridegroom took his lady's hand in his own. Then the service drew to its end. The book was closed, and the whole group, led by the priest, came slowly towards the door near which I stood. As they came I drew aside the curtain to let them pass. The clergyman gave me a

quest  
sligh

I s  
hand  
man  
dress

'S  
denta  
riage,  
shoul  
your

It wo  
He  
sent.

but  
Here,  
the fi  
and  
wedde  
old m

I s  
after  
groom

then,  
forwa  
appoint  
the m  
casual

I st  
he ca  
of the  
in the  
ceremo

The  
newly  
old cl

their p  
footsto  
then t  
immed

many  
coach.  
I lo

man  
registe

the bo

At t

low, o  
doors

numbe

it was

registe

He kn  
that h  
lower



questioning glance, and the bridegroom bowed slightly. Then they passed into the vestry.

I stood for a moment with the curtain in my hand, and before I could drop it the old clergyman appeared again in the doorway and addressed me.

'Sir,' he said courteously, 'you have accidentally witnessed the ceremony of this marriage, and though we do not know you, we should feel much favoured if you would sign your name as a witness in the church register. It would save the gossip of the postillion.'

He turned again, as though sure of my consent. Nor, indeed, did I hesitate for a moment, but followed him in silence into the room. Here, upon a small table, lay a book, open at the first page, while an old-fashioned inkhorn and quill-pen stood beside it. The newly-wedded pair were waiting at the table, and the old man stood behind it.

I saw the clergyman bend over the book, after which he handed the quill to the bridegroom. The bride followed in her turn; and then, at a sign from the clergyman, I stepped forward, received the pen, and wrote in the appointed place my name, Gilbert Balfour, with the necessary particulars. As I did so I casually glanced over the page.

I stepped back, and the bridegroom bowed as he caught my eye—a low courtly bow it was, of the old Georgian days. Then the old man in the background signed his name, and the ceremony was over.

The bridegroom, with a stately step, led his newly-made wife towards the doorway, and the old clerk, after raising the curtains to permit their passage, followed them out. I heard their footsteps on the hollow pavement of the aisle; then there came a faint sound of voices, followed immediately by a ringing of harness, a thud of many hoofs, and the lumbering roll of a heavy coach. Then silence fell once more.

I looked back into the room. The old clergyman had apparently been poring over the register, for now he rose from the table, closed the book softly, and prepared to put it away.

At the farther end of the vestry stood a long, low, oaken cupboard, massive and heavy. Its doors had been opened, and I saw within a number of books piled one upon another. But it was not there that the old man laid the register, though evidently that was its place. He knelt down, and in the next moment I saw that he had opened a shallow drawer in the lower frame of the case, where it rested upon

the floor. In this drawer he carefully placed the book, and I heard a sound of sliding wood as he softly closed it. Then there was a loud, sharp click.

And I started up, to find the care-taker of St Sepulchre's standing at my side.

'Dear me, sir,' she cried in wonder, 'you must have fallen asleep! I came back to look for the keys, because I thought you had gone and forgotten all about them.'

I was kneeling by the altar before the discoloured brass. There was a coldness and stiffness in all my limbs, and I felt dazed and stupefied. The woman stared at me curiously as I rose hastily to my feet.

'It is strange,' I said, with a shiver. 'I—I suppose I must have been dreaming.'

I tried to collect myself as I brushed the dust from my clothing. I had been asleep, the woman said, and the church was darker now by an hour. I was shivering, too, with the chillness of the stone floor; but the strange vividness of my dream was still with me, and I looked around, half fearfully and half wonderingly.

The eerie sensation which seemed to cling to me was strangely unpleasant. The woman seemed to feel it too, for after a short pause she turned towards the door. I followed her closely, trying to gather my wandering thoughts into a connected memory; but it was not until I had left the building far behind that I succeeded.

Then I paused in the street and passed my hand across my eyes. Dream or no dream, one thing suddenly came before my mental vision as plainly as though I held it in my hand, and that was the sheet of the church register. The written names stood out clear and distinct, and I knew that I had signed as witness to the marriage of George, Viscount Harriden, to Anna Thorne; and the date that I had noted so carefully when I signed my name was the 5th day of January 1790!

### CHAPTER III.



It is a most remarkable story, whatever the result may be,' said the Earl of Ritford. 'I have never heard anything more circumstantial.'

He glanced across at the solicitor as he spoke; but that gentleman, who evidently regarded me as something of a visionary, gave a sceptical smile.

'Yes, my lord,' he agreed politely; 'but I am afraid we must not build upon it. As I have said, the registers at St Sepulchre's have already been thoroughly examined, and we find that the first marriage recorded there in the year 1790 was that of a village couple on the 21st of January.'

He looked questioningly in my direction as he spoke, for since I had insisted, against his opinion, that the Earl should hear my story, he had naturally felt some little pique. But as I did not answer his look, he turned to the gentleman who sat beside him, the Rev. Harris Hewson, curate of St Sepulchre's.

'Come, Mr Hewson,' he said, with a slight smile, 'what do you think of Mr Balfour's experiences?'

The Rev. Harris Hewson had been gazing through the carriage window, apparently taking no heed of the conversation. But now he turned with some show of interest.

'When I hear of such matters,' he said quietly, 'I cannot but think of Shakespeare's dictum—there are many things beyond the dreams of our philosophy.'

The Earl nodded in agreement, and the solicitor opened his lips to speak again; but the curate went on:

'And there is one thing to my knowledge strangely corroborative of Mr Balfour's story. In his dream the officiating clergyman appeared to be a man advanced in years. Of course there would be nothing remarkable in that but for the fact that in 1790 the rector of the old parish was the Rev. Peter Godolphin, a man of over seventy years of age. He died early in that year. I have studied the church's history, and this fact has suddenly occurred to me.'

The Earl glanced at his solicitor and then at me; but before he could speak the carriage stopped.

'Here we are,' said Mr Bailey briskly, glad, no doubt, to end the conversation; 'we shall soon know all there is to know.'

We left the carriage, and when Mr Hewson had turned the ponderous key, we passed from the little Norman porch into the echoing church and up the stone-paved aisle.

It was all as I had left it yesterday—dim, damp, and gloomy. Mr Bailey shivered, but the Earl nodded when I pointed out the brass by the altar.

'I see,' he replied, with some interest. 'It seems to be a fine specimen of fifteenth-century

work. I must see it afterwards. But this is the vestry, I suppose.'

'This is the vestry,' said Mr Hewson, quickly leading the way through the now uncurtained door into the inner room. 'This is the vestry, Mr Balfour.'

'Yes,' I answered, making an effort to control my excitement. 'This is the room—the same room; and there is the oaken case which I saw. It contained a number of books.'

'It contains them now,' broke in the solicitor half impatiently. 'We went through them the other week. I have mentioned the result.'

The curate had now unlocked the case, and in a moment more threw the doors apart.

'It was not there,' I said quickly. 'The book was placed in the drawer below. Open that'—

I stopped in confusion, for as I looked more closely I saw, to my astonishment, that the bottom frame of the case was apparently one solid board, of the thickness of an inch and a half. It was carved and ornamented with rude leaves and flowers; but there was no drawer to be seen; neither handle nor knob, nor any sign of a keyhole.

'H'm!' said the solicitor, giving me a glance of quiet triumph. 'This is where we fail.'

I did not answer him, but knelt down before the case, and began to closely examine the bottom frame.

'It is remarkably thick for a single board,' I suggested a moment later.

'It is evidently very old,' replied the Earl. 'Everything was solid in those days.'

'Mr Balfour thinks there may be a secret drawer,' remarked Mr Hewson curiously. 'It would not be at all an unusual thing. Ha!'

For I had been sounding the frame from beneath, testing its thickness and trying the most prominent features of the carving; and at the instant of the curate's exclamation the whole front of the thick board, with its ornamental work and tracery, came away in my hands.

I had touched the spring and revealed the secret. The bottom of the case was composed of two boards instead of one, and the carved oak facing was nothing but the outer work and shield of a shallow drawer, which ran the whole length and width of the case, and fitted exactly into the cavity. And in this drawer, exactly as I had seen it placed, lay a large book, similar to those on the shelves above!

My companions bent over it; but I was so taken aback, in spite of my confidence, by the

suddenness of the discovery that I could not take it up. Then the solicitor, with shaking fingers, tried to open the covers.

'Take care,' said the Earl huskily. 'It is damp. There!'

It lay open before us; but the letters on the page swam before my eyes, and I could not distinguish them. There was a short, painful silence for a minute; then the Earl gave a deep sigh of relief.

We were grouped together, kneeling upon the damp stone floor. It was Mr Hewson who spoke first.

'This is the proof,' he said, with quiet satisfaction. 'Peter Godolphin has signed here, and his clerk, William Baker. No doubt the old man saw that the marriage was an unusual one, and thought he would keep the record in safety; but he died almost directly afterwards, and when the next marriage took place they had to begin a new register, because this one could not be found.'

'That explains it, of course,' said the Earl of Ritford. Then he went on in a lower tone: 'But look at the name of the other witness. Mr Balfour, look!'

I bent my eyes upon the page, but, owing to my agitation, could not decipher the faded writing.

'It is your name, sir! Look!' put in the

solicitor testily. 'See — *Gilbert Balfour* — your signature!'

I stared from one to another as they gazed questioningly into my face. The whole incident, from the moment I had seen the advertisement in the paper, passed swiftly through my mind, with its strange memories and stranger mystery.

Then my experience of yesterday—had it been simply a dream, or a vivid flash of mysterious memory, so complete, so perfect, that it had given life and reality to a scene that had lain forgotten for a century? Had I written that name myself in some dead past, or was this but some supreme coincidence, some terribly fantastic turn in the mazes of chance?

And suddenly I felt that I knew, remembering Morden's remarks, remembering the struggles of recollection and my late inexplicable convictions. I felt the blood rush to my heart with the shock, and I saw a growing wonder, which was more than wonder, in the faces of those about me. May Heaven forgive me if I answered their questions wrongly, if I made a startling mystery of what was capable of simpler telling. I have yet to learn a better answer.

'No,' I faltered. 'It is the signature of my great-grandfather, Gilbert Balfour, diamond merchant, antiquary, and brass collector, of The Minories. He died in 1803. It is his signature —and—and it is mine! —I know it is mine!'



# THE LAST VOYAGE OF MARTIN VALLANCE:

A SEA STORY OF TO-DAY.

By JOHN ARTHUR BARRY,

AUTHOR OF 'STEVE BROWN'S BUNYIP,' 'IN THE GREAT DEEP,' ETC.

## CHAPTER I.

### OVERBOARD.



HAD been at sea eight years. As a boy, innate love of romance and Marryat's novels had sent me there. Otherwise, there was no particular necessity for such a step. My father held the living of Compton-on-Tor in South Devon, and was rich enough to have given me a choice of professions. Nor in all those eight years did I once encounter the romance I had fondly imagined was the inevitable lot of the seafarer—the romance of incident. Indeed, a more humdrum, matter-of-fact life could scarcely be conceived, with its inevitable recurrence of headwinds and fair, gales and calms, long passages and short. Actually, so far as my memory serves me, throughout those years the most exciting matter that happened was the carrying away of an upper foretop-sail-yard. Still, if I was not altogether satisfied with the regular routine of the hard and monotonous profession I had so wilfully chosen, I loved the sea itself beyond anything, and was never tired of studying its myriad moods, and attempting to interpret the language of the many tongues with which it spoke to the wanderers upon its mighty breast.

Although 'a passed master,' I had not yet been lucky enough to get a better billet than a second mate's. Ships, comparatively, were few, and officers as plentiful as blackberries in a good season; and I was considered fortunate when a berth as second mate, at £5 per month, was offered me on board the *Antelope*, a 1000-ton ship bound from London to Fremantle in Western Australia. I hardly took the same view of things, and had quite made up my mind, as it was rather late in the day for

choosing another path in life, to do as so many others were doing, and 'change into steam.'

Five-and-twenty shillings per week, after eight years' servitude given to the mastering of an arduous and fatiguing profession, and one in which the disparity between remuneration and responsibility was so vast, appeared, even to my mind, to leave something to be desired. As for romance, that had all been pretty well knocked out of me, and I had ceased to look for or expect anything of the kind. The ocean, clearly, had altered, and been modernised to suit the times—brought, so to speak, sternly 'up to date,' and had, save for a few rare outbreaks, taught itself to recognise that fact, and behave as an every-day, commonplace piece of water should. This, at least, is what I thought whilst I paced the *Antelope's* deck as she went roaring down the Channel with a fair wind behind her, her Plimsoll mark just awash, and three lower topgallant-sails standing out against the clear sky like concaves of sculptured marble. About the ship and my shipmates there was nothing more particularly noticeable than there had been in half-a-dozen similar ships and ships' companies I had sailed with. Of course, in detail, they varied; but, take them full and by, skipper, officers, crew, routine, rig, and provisions, there was the usual family likeness. Merchant-captains commanding vessels like the *Antelope* are as often as not, in these modern times, gentlemen. Captain Craigie was one; and the chief mate, Mr Thomas, was another. Both were scientific and skilful navigators, and both officers in the Royal Naval Reserve. The ship herself was a flying clipper, steel-built; crew mixed; provisions fairly good;



every prospect of the usual dull and eventless voyage to 'Down Under' and back again. It was my last at any rate, and it has given me quite enough to talk about for the rest of my life, and especially when any one happens to remark in mine or my wife's hearing that there is no romance in the sea nowadays.

I am not going to say anything more about the *Antelope* just now, because this story doesn't concern her very much, and after I left her so suddenly, Captain Craigie and three of her men were the only recognisable members I ever again saw of the ship's company.

And now, having cleared the way a little, I will heave ahead with my yarn, by reading which you will see that, even in the present prosaic age, curious things may happen to those who do business in great waters; and may also realise that Mother Ocean has lost nothing of her old-time power, when she chooses to exert it, of staging romantic scenes, and incidents grotesque and tragic and mysterious.

We had called at Capetown, after a fairly quick run from the Lizard, to land a few passengers and take in a little cargo; and, in place of keeping away to the southward, the captain stood along the 26th parallel. In doing this he ran a risk of meeting with light and unfavourable winds. But that was purely his business. We were just now in that sort of No Man's Water between the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans shunned by sailors, and used only by a few steamers. Our position at noon had been 45° 15' east longitude, 36° 13' south latitude, or about 1300 miles from Capetown. The night was dark and squally when I came on deck to keep the middle watch, and as I stumped the poop, listening to the wind, that seemed every now and then to shrill with a deeper note in the roar of it aloft amongst the canvas, there came a cry of 'Light on the lee bow, sir!' from the man on the fore-castle-head, an ordinary seaman. But, peer as I might, I could see no light. So, descending the poop-ladder, I walked along the main-deck, and jumped on to the rail just before the fore-rigging, and leaned out-board in order to get a better view. The seaman stood on the break of the fore-castle, a dark figure rising and falling with the vessel's head against the patchy sky. 'Where away, my lad?' I asked. 'There, sir,' answered he, pointing.

I was holding on, carelessly enough, to some of the running gear—jib-halyards probably, and

not to the standing rigging, as I should have done. I stared, and leaned over farther still. 'A star, you mutton-head!' I exclaimed, as my eye caught what he was after—the yellow glint of Antares, just on the extreme rim of the horizon. The words were scarce out of my mouth when I felt something 'give' aloft, and in a second I was in the boiling, foaming backwash of surge alongside.

As, gasping and choking, I came to the surface again, the first thought that flashed across my brain was that the ship was still reeling off her thirteen knots, and that I, Martin Vallance, was no better than a dead man. Swimming with one hand, I squeezed the brine out of my eyes with the other, but so dazed and stunned was I by the amazing suddenness of the affair that I could see nothing, looking, possibly, in quite the wrong direction. There was a nasty, short, choppy sea on, too, and I found it took me all my time to keep afloat. Then I raised my head and shouted, but with poor heart. I knew so well the almost utter uselessness of it. What merchant seaman under like conditions ever gets picked up? And I mentally followed the course of events on board. The lookout—a lad on his first voyage—after a minute's gaping astonishment, roars, 'Man overboard!' The watch on deck, skulking in snug corners, rush sleepy-eyed to the rail and stare. In my case, as officer of the watch, it was worse than any one else's. Most likely the mate would have to be called before any measures were taken. Certainly the fellow at the wheel might put it hard over, but that would do no good. And by this time the ship would be a full three miles away. Probably, after some twenty minutes' hard work with covers and gripes, a boat would be lowered, pull about aimlessly for an hour, and then get aboard again. In the morning the log-book would show my epitaph: 'On such-and-such a date, longitude and latitude so-and-so, a gloom was cast over the ship,' &c.

All this worked in my mind as, turning my back to wind and sea, I swam slowly and mechanically along, thinking whether it might not be as well to throw up my hands at once and go down instead of lingering. But I was young and strong; and, heavens! how passionately the love of life runs in such a body when there seems to be a chance of losing it! And surely, I thought, there must be a buoy or two somewhere. So I kept on. Fortunately I had only light shoes in place of sea-boots, but my

pea-jacket felt as if it were made of sheet-lead. The first sudden shock and surprise over, my thoughts turned to, and worked collectedly enough, even to the extent of arguing, pro and con, whether or not it was worth while to go to the trouble of taking my coat off, as I could have done, for I was at home in the water. Presently, standing up, I strained my eyes in another long look around. But I could hear nothing except the moaning of the wind, see nothing except the white tops of the short waves as they came snarling and hissing around me; these, and, overhead, the vast concavity of ragged darkness, lit here and there by a few stars. I stared in the direction I now knew the ship should be. But there was no sign. A man's vision in a tumble of a sea has not time to settle itself to reach very far. Still, I thought I might have seen a light had they shown one. As I turned, with a short prayer on my lips, determined to swim till I should sink from pure exhaustion, I heard something come down on the wind like the cry of a child—'Ma-ma-ma-a!' changing into a long querulous bleat that seemed very familiar. Staring intently in the direction, after a while I made out some dark object, now looming as big as a boat on the crest of a wave, now hidden altogether in a water-valley. A few minutes more and I was alongside it, clutching the wet and slippery sides, whilst from its interior proceeded a volley of plaintive callings. I recognised the thing now; and as I caught hold of one of its stumpy legs and dragged myself on top, and lay at full length, panting and nearly spent, I blessed the sailor-man who had made such good use of his opportunity.

Whilst in Capetown the captain, who was ailing, had been prescribed a diet of goat's milk and rum, or, at least, frequent doses of the mixture. The rum we had plenty of aboard; and the skipper soon got a fine goat, newly kidded, from one of the farms round about. He also bought from an Indian trader, then in harbour, a four-legged massive animal-pen, iron-barred, strong as a house, and almost big enough for a man to live in. This structure, its supports 'razeed' by our carpenter, and at first placed aft, was presently, because of Nanny's wailings when, every night, her kid was taken from her, shifted forward and lashed on the pigpens close to the door of the topgallant forecastle, in which the sailors lived. Now what annoyed us aft annoyed Jack forward just as much, and there were consequently growls, deep and long, from the watch below. And

I saw what had happened as clearly as if I had been there. In the rush and hurry consequent upon my tumble things had been thrown overboard at random; and a sailor, seeing his chance, slashed through the lashings of Nan's pen, waited for a weather roll, and with a push, gave it a free passage. Flush with the rail, as it was, its own weight, almost, would have taken it over. Thus in one act did the ship lose an officer from aft and a nuisance from forward. And even whilst lying across the bars that formed the front of the cage or pen, dripping like a wet swab on to Nan, who, silent now, was trying to nibble my toes, I could well picture the skipper's rage when he missed his goat. Of course he would be sorry for me too. We had always been good friends. But then I could be replaced at once (there were in the *Antelope* at least three mates before the mast), the goat not at all.

Luckily for Nan and myself, too, the pen had fallen on its back, and rode face to the sky, so high and dry, except for a swish of spray now and again, that I had no need to loose the canvas curtains which were made to fasten over the bars in bad weather. Putting my hand down, I felt her skin, warm through the wet hair, and you wouldn't believe how grateful that touch was to my chilled and sodden body; ay, and how comforting, also, to my heart, just now so utterly devoid of hope, was the sense of that dumb companionship. And though I knew that, barring something very like a miracle, my hours were numbered; still, compared with my condition so lately, here was, at least, a reprieve. I have already said that the *Antelope*, in place of stretching away to the southward for a westerly wind, as most vessels would have done, had kept well up towards the Indian Ocean, making, in fact, a nearly straight line for her port. This was in one way a gain for me, in another a distinct loss—the former by assuring me of warm and most likely fairly fine weather; the latter by taking me quite out of the track of outward or homeward bound shipping. Had I gone overboard amongst the huge, ice-cold combers of the South Atlantic in forty-five degrees or thereabout, I should have been food for the fishes long ere now. All these matters I turned over in my mind as I lay at full length, with room to spare, and gave Nanny a hand to suck, and longed heartily for daylight.

As the night slowly passed, the jump of a sea that had been shaking the soul out of me went down perceptibly; the wind, too, blew warmer

and more lightly. Of seeing the *Antelope* any more I had no hopes. By the stars I could tell I was drifting to the northwards, and quite away from her course. Still, the captain might stand by through the night, and with a look-out at the royal mast-head, they might possibly sight me. A forlorn chance! And, indeed, when at last the sun rose gorgeous out of a great bank of opal and purple, and balancing myself like a circus-man, I stood up and took in the horizon, and the sea that ran to it, foot by foot with my smarting eyes, I could see nothing. Nanny and I were alone on the wide and empty ocean, and evidently travelling in the set of some current. And it was owing to this, probably, that I was not sighted in the morning; for the ship had actually shortened sail and stood by the whole night through, tacking at intervals, so as to keep as near the spot as possible. So they told me afterwards. It was more than many a captain would have done, goat or no goat. And I was the better pleased on a certain very momentous occasion, of which you will hear in due course, to be able to make my acknowledgments to my old captain and thank him for his humanity; also to help him a little, in his own time of need, in a different fashion. However, this last is an affair that concerns not the story.

Of Nan, previously, I had never taken much notice. Now, as I looked down, I saw that she was a great strapping lump of an animal, in fine condition, with a well-bred, good-tempered head, bearing a short, sharp pair of horns; and a queer squab of a tail that she carried in a jaunty sort of curve over her backbone. She was mostly black in colour, with a big white patch here and there, and she kept her legs straddled to the heave of the sea like an old sailor, and stared up at me with a pair of big, black, bewildered eyes as who should say: 'Where's my child? And what's become of the steward? And what's this row all about?' And, sad and sore as I was, I couldn't for the life of me help grinning as I looked at my shipmate. All at once, underneath her, I caught sight of three circular brown objects; and suddenly I felt hungry. All day long the skipper used to stuff Nan with white cabin bread, lumps of sugar, fancy biscuits, and such-like, for she'd eat anything. And at times the men, perhaps by way of contrast, would throw her a bad biscuit out of their own barge. At the present moment there were three of these under Nan's feet. I stretched an arm down, but could not reach them by a full

six inches. Nor could I open the door, forming as it did half of the front of the pen, without the risk of Nan jumping out. At last, after many vain efforts to finger them, taking the kerchief off my neck, I tore it into strips, joined them, and bending my knife to the end, managed to harpoon one. It was soft and sodden with sea-water, and full of dead weevils; but it tasted delicious. I offered a bit to the goat, but she only smelled at it and stamped her foot, snorting indignantly.

'All right, my lady,' I said; 'perhaps your stomach won't be so proud as time passes!' And I secured the others in the same fashion, and stowed them carefully away in my pocket.

It was a real comfort to have something to talk to, although it could only answer me with impatient coughings and cryings as it scuttled to and fro, standing up now and again to nibble and pull at my clothes through the bars. Even that took away the dismal sense of loneliness and desolation induced by the look of an empty ocean all around running to an empty sky.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE CUTTER.



AND now the weather took a thoroughly settled sort of look—blue sea, blue sky, and the sun just hot enough to be grateful. A light but steady breeze blew from the south-west; and in place of the short, choppy waves of the previous night was a long, oily, unbroken swell, over which we rode fairly dry, and showing two feet of a side, with, clear of the surface, a couple of stumpy outriggers, where the carpenter had cut down the tall legs of the pen when it came on board the *Antelope*. The two lower ones were of course, under water.

Since meeting with Nanny I had felt quite hopeful, almost cheerful, indeed. Twenty-four, strong as a young horse, sound as a new bell, with eye of a gull and digestion of an ostrich, doesn't stop in the dumps very long under any circumstances; and I sat in the sun, and stared round the horizon, and talked to Nan, whilst our ungainly craft tubbed about, yawing, and slueing, and lolloping over the regular seas. Still, the salt biscuit had made me thirsty, and my throat was like an overboiled potato, when, towards midday, clouds began to rise in the west, slowly at first, then with such rapidity that all the

sky in that quarter soon became as black as an ink-pot. I had just taken a dip overboard, and was munching a finger's-breadth of biscuit to still the inward grinding, when, as I glared thirstily at the huge darkness that was creeping gradually over all, thick and dense, as if it meant to blot out sea and sky for evermore, my eye caught a glimpse, on the edge of the storm-curtain, of something showing white against the gloomy background. Standing up, I saw it more plainly. It looked like a ship's royal or a boat's sail. That it was no flicker of sea-bird's wing or breaking crest of a wave I was certain; although, even as I told myself so, it was gone—engulfed in that profound blackness, beginning now to enfold me and spread to the farther horizon, whilst streaks of vivid lightning and low mutterings of thunder heralded the approaching storm.

The wind had died entirely away, and the gloom was so thick I could hardly see to cast adrift the curtains of the pen and fix them snugly over the bars. But for these things—made to protect Nan from the spray on the *Antelope* in heavy weather—we should have been done, for I was certain that enough water was going to fall in the next few minutes to sink the cage. As it was, I felt nervous about the result. I had thought there was no wind in the storm. But I was wrong, for presently a low, white mound showed itself advancing from the edge of the horizon, quite discernible with the play of the lightning upon it, and travelling swiftly towards me, roaring with a mighty noise of wind and water as it came. Thunder pealed and crashed as if the foundations of the ocean were breaking up, whilst the heavens glowed with such continuous flames of electricity as made the eye wither to look upon. I had never in all my experience seen anything like this. And I pretty well gave myself up for lost—feeling in that moment neither hunger nor thirst—as the wall of wind-swept water roared upon us and took the pen up and threw it in the air, and whirled it round and round, and hither and thither in a cloud of spume and hissing, pelting foam, till, as I lay, my hands gripping the legs of the pen and my toes stuck through the canvas cover, I grew sick and dizzy with the motion and turmoil, and expected each minute to feel the cage capsize, fill, and go down. But with that first great wave the worst was over, and Nan and I were still right-side up.

And now, at last, down came the rain, not in drops, but in such solid sheets as fairly

bore me flat, beating the breath out of me as I stretched face downwards and listened to the water pouring off me like a cataract. But I was glad, for I knew the fall would quiet that venomously hissing sea, that seethed and raged so close to my soaked and battered body. As the first weight passed I opened a corner of the tarpaulin and peered at Nan. She was crouching in one corner, and there was far more water washing about than I fancied the look of, considering that I had nothing I could use as a bailer. Also, the pen had sunk appreciably under the added weight of fresh water and salt.

In an hour the storm had gone, the sun shone out, and a nasty tumble of a sea got up, one of those criss-cross seas that seem to come from all quarters at once—a sea that speedily made a half-tide rock of my refuge, and threatened to fill it completely in another hour or two more. As to wind, there was none to bother much about; and I was getting the benefit of the released sea, held so long under by its iron hand. Presently, to avoid being swept off, I had to change my position, and now I stood on the bottom leg up to my waist in water, and hung on to the top one—a precarious business, to say nothing of sharks. Every few minutes a couple of chopping seas would make a rendezvous of the pen, and, meeting, break clean over it, half smothering me, and, as I could plainly feel, each time putting more water inside. At this rate of going, I considered that less than an hour would finish matters, unless the wretchedly wild sea went down.

I had been straining my gaze to the horizon, when, gradually bringing it round, I saw something over my shoulder that made me actually yell with the surprise and delight of it. There, not two hundred yards away, nodding and dancing to the chop, was a fine big lump of a cutter-rigged boat, her foresail hauled down and partly hanging in the water over the bows, the mainsail and gaff heaped along the boom. Over the latter spar leaned a couple of men clad in blue cotton dungaree, looking straight at me, but giving no sign. Their features were dark, and as their arms hung down over the sail the sunshine glittered on some bright objects, apparently held in their grasp. Climbing on to the pen, I shouted at the top of my voice and waved my arms. But they never stirred, and I thought I could make out, even at that distance, a sneering expression on their livid faces. Again I yelled; ay, and cursed them, and shook my fist at them, for the boat was



passing me, blown along before the wind—passing me at right angles, a beautiful model of a craft, her white side, with its narrow gold beading, glistening wet to each heave of the straight stem. A regular dandy of a boat, never built, it struck me even at that moment, to be carried on shipboard. My God, how swiftly she was getting away from me! Evidently there was only one thing to be done, but I hesitated. The stolid cruelty of those dark faces scared me. Would not such villains be apt to take pleasure in repulsing a drowning man who came to them for rescue? Then I laughed aloud.

What could it matter how the end came, when come it must if I stayed where I was? And without further thought I stripped, plunged in, and swam for the boat. I was weaker than I thought; and the cross sea took a lot of getting through. Also, the boat was farther away than I supposed her to be, and had it not been for the sail acting in great measure as a drag, I doubt whether I should ever have done the swim. As it was, when at last I grasped the sodden canvas, all I could do was to hang on to it, panting convulsively, and not knowing when boat-hook or hand-spike might descend on my head. A minute or so's rest, and then, painfully crawling over the bows mother-naked as I was, I staggered aft. The pair still stood in the same position, close to each other, staring steadfastly seaward, their backs towards me, in the natural, easy posture of men resting. Were they drunk, or blind, or deaf and dumb? I wondered, as I stood there, on the break of the little half-deck, staring down at them. And then, my eyes travelling along their bodies, a great hot sweat broke out, tingling like prickly heat all over me, and I reeled back in dismay as I saw that, from the hips downwards, they were the colour of saplings charred by a bush-fire!

Black as ink, without a stitch of clothing, ran four straddling, shapeless stumps that had once been thighs and legs—black as ink they ran into the foul rain-water that washed between them in the boat's bottom. A truly desperate and awful sight, and one that made me feel sick and ill as I gazed alternately at the burnt supports and the fleshy trunks above them. The horrible spectacle took all the stomach out of me, perhaps because that organ was so miserably empty just at the moment. Anyhow, it was some minutes before I mustered courage to step across and face that grisly pair. God only knows what colour their skin had originally been, but now

it was a horrid purplish blue. They had stiff, scrubby black hair and beards, and were so much alike they might have been brothers.

In more than one place on breast and arm I caught sight, through the slashed dungaree, of scarce-healed wounds, telling of wild work not long since. On each hip lay, in its curved sheath, a murderous-looking knife; and from a steel cuff on each of their wrists hung a small chain—some of the links fused and melted as if in a furnace. These were the bright objects I had noticed. And they doubtless formed a key to the tragedy, or at least to part of it. Snugging their boat in the terrible storm of the morning, the pair had been struck by lightning and instantly shattered and withered as I now beheld them. But before that? I could not give a guess even—mutineers, pirates, convicts? Well, here was romance at last, of a sort, good measure, heaped up, more than enough to satisfy me for those humdrum years that had passed!

The boat was larger than I imagined. Decked better than half-way her length, giving her a cabin with handsome doors, facing a space aft—a sort of well, wherein was a small binnacle, and around which ran lockers—I should have taken her for a pleasure-boat, built for use and rough weather; or one belonging to some government official who had to run out to sea, or down a harbour to meet ships. Certainly, no sort of vessel that I was acquainted with carried such a craft on her deck. But, wherever she hailed from, she looked a sound, fast, wholesome boat, and more than a handful for any one man to manage; also, decidedly not the property of those two silent ones. All these thoughts passed through my brain in less time than it takes to put them down. Indeed, whilst thinking, I was busy hauling the foresail on deck, not without, I must confess, more than one or two nervous glances over my shoulder. Then stepping gingerly aft, I looked around for the pen, having no idea of deserting a shipmate in distress. For some minutes I could not see it; and when at length I picked it up, I was astonished to find what a distance away it was, and what a mere speck it appeared on the sea. Taking its bearings by the compass, I paused, reluctant with disgust, at the next job on hand. But it had to be done. I wanted that mainsail, and yet I hated to touch those forbidding figures gazing silently over the sea with lowering, hideous faces.

Easing off the mainsheet, I thrust the boom to leeward. But they were not to be got rid of

in that fashion, and they hung on with a terrible tenacity that dismayed me. As I stood watching in half-hearted fashion, the boat gave a sudden swerve, bringing the boom back again, and causing the bodies to hit the side of the cutter violently; and, to my horror, the lower parts of each of them snapped short off carrotwise, whilst the trunks swayed to and fro like pendulums on the spar. This sort of thing was not to be borne, and, with desperate energy, I picked up the halves—they were as light as corks—and hove them overboard. Then, grasping the body nearest me, I dragged at it, having to exert all my strength to make it let go its hold, and served it the same way, the belt and sheath slipping over the exposed hip-bones as I did so. Tackling the other one, I pulled too hard, and it came away with a swing, and, turning, flew to me, resting on my bare breast.

Shaking myself free with a shout of terror, I pitched it overboard. I was trembling all over, and the sweat ran down my body in streams. Never, in my worst nightmare, could I have imagined such a gruesome contract as the one I had just finished. With a feverish eagerness to be gone, I cast the gaskets loose, hoisted the mainsail, rattled the foresail up, got the cutter before the wind, and kept away for Nan and the pen—bearing a good couple of miles abeam.

She steered like a clock; and though the breeze had dwindled to a mere light air, she slipped through the easing tumble at a rate that soon brought me alongside my first refuge. 'Hurrah, Nan, old woman!' I shouted, whilst I quickly got into my clothes; 'here we are again; never say die; for neither of us was born to be drowned!' 'Ma-a-a-a,' bleated poor Nan as I rolled back the tarpaulins and, with some trouble, threw open the big barred door. On my calling her, she was out on top of the cage in a second, and after just one sailor-like stare around, watching her chance, she hopped into the boat as clean as a whistle, although it stood full four feet above the cage, and bad footing both ways. A rather dilapidated-looking goat she was, too, with chafing sores on hips and shoulders, and her coat all brine-roughened and matted. But there were lots of life in her still, and she made the deck rattle as she scampered fore and aft, bleating at the top of her voice.

Dowsing the sails, I made fast to the pen for a time whilst I did a little exploring with a view to food and drink, which, Heaven knows, we both needed badly.

First, with a bucket, I baled the water out,

not liking the feel of the greasy splashing between my legs, any more than the suggestive dark colour of it. Then, opening the door of the little cabin, I crouched in, closely followed by Nan. The interior was low, and dimly lit by a couple of glass bull's-eyes in the deck. There were no bunks, but all around ran a cushioned seat, covering, as I soon found, lockers full of odds and ends. On the floor were some rugs and blankets; an empty demijohn, smelling of rum; some tin pannikins and plates; mats of Indian manufacture; long black Trichinopoly cigars; woven bags of grass, containing betel-nut and withered areca-leaves for chewing, together with many more signs of dirty native occupation. But everything was scattered about in the wildest confusion. A handsome little lamp swung from a bracket, and lighting it with a match from a big tin boxful in one of the lockers, I was enabled to see more clearly. And now I noticed ominous black patches on the brown leather of the cushions, and the floor was simply piebald with them. Also, I picked up a couple of great sheath-knives covered with rusty-brown stains from haft to point. Undoubtedly there had been murderous work done in that little sea-room. Opening some of the lockers, I found preserved meats, a few bottles of rum, a great bag of cabin biscuits, a lump of cold salt junk on a tin dish, a jar of some sort of wine, another of molasses, more cigars, a whole cheese, a string of onions, and one locker was nearly full of sweet potatoes, at which Nan sniffed approvingly. Perhaps what pleased me most of all was, lashed right in the eyes, a big cask of water, which, on sounding, I found over half-full.

Carrying an armful of provisions, I went out, glad to breathe the fresh air after that of the cabin, which smelled stifling with an odour of rum, stale cigar-smoke, murder, and sudden death.

But Nan seemed uneasy, and in place of eating the potatoes and biscuit covered with molasses (one of her special weaknesses), she started to butt me and sing out complainingly. At last, losing patience, I was about to tie her up, when my eye fell on her udders, swollen near to bursting; and, sailor though I was, I felt that something wanted easing. So, taking a basin, I set to work, awkwardly enough I dare say, but effectually; and Nan, relieved, presently made great play with her food.

And what a meal that was! Never have I eaten one like it since! Nor, I suppose, shall I ever eat such another—I mean with the same

relish  
nothing  
two o  
cold  
Freak  
cheese  
Nan's  
never  
that  
very  
tack,  
tier,  
eating  
clear  
light  
and  
out o  
close  
the m  
awning  
could  
and,  
ligious  
show  
As  
throu  
one m  
I had  
hopef  
tion a  
once  
thank  
could  
at H  
dark  
notw  
an un  
for it  
into a



gentle  
I put  
to dry  
and a  
since,  
to cov

relish and appetite. For twenty-four hours nothing had passed my lips but a nugget or two of brine-sodden, weevily biscuit. And now, cold junk, potted ox-tongue, white Peak and Frean's best ship's bread, raw onions, and cheese, all washed down by copious draughts of Nan's milk mixed with a little rum! I had never drunk such a brew before, but I argued that what was good for the skipper couldn't very well hurt a second mate. And very capital tack, too, I found it. After stowing, tier upon tier, such a feed as one never gets the chance of eating in the same style twice in a lifetime, I cleared away the things; moored afresh on a bight, ready to let go at a moment's notice; and fetching the cleanest cushion I could find out of the cabin, and placing it on a grating close to the tiller, I lay down, first drawing the mainsail over the boom, to form a sort of awning. But for a while, tired as I was, I couldn't sleep. I was young and thoughtless, and, like most seamen, although far from irreligious, still extraordinarily shy of making any show of devotion, openly or otherwise.

As I lay there, however, and there passed through my mind the wonderful series of what one might almost fairly call miracles by which I had been preserved and brought to my present hopeful and comfortable position, when destruction seemed so inevitable and so near, I all at once felt impelled to get up on my knees and thank God heartily, in as suitable words as I could muster, for the mercies I had experienced at His hands since plunging overboard in that dark middle watch. I am sorry to say that, notwithstanding the stock I came of, it was an unwonted exercise. But I felt all the better for it, and lying down again, went off at once into a sound but not altogether dreamless sleep.

### CHAPTER III.

#### BIG GAME IN MID-OCEAN.



HAD slept long indeed, for when I awoke, mightily refreshed, the stars were paling before the approach of a new dawn creeping up the eastern sky. A cool and gentle breeze was blowing from the south, and I put on my coat and vest that I had hung up to dry. After attending to Nan I had a biscuit and a cupful of the warm milk, which ever since, by the way, I have infinitely preferred to cow's. As yet I was rather undecided what

to do, although now with a good boat under my feet. Southward lay the ships. But there, also, lay the bitter weather and the high seas, necessitating such constant vigilance as, with so scant a crew, must end in mishap dire and complete unless very speedily some vessel were sighted. The boat, too, was rather large for one man to manage with comfort in anything like a sea-way; and the lighter the wind and warmer the weather, the better, I judged, would be the chance of eventual escape.

Of my position I was, of course, uncertain; nor, though I overhauled the cabin again more carefully, could I find any instrument that might enable me to take an observation. My one chance, it seemed to me, was to get far enough north so as to cross the track of Australian steamers. I would have given my little finger for a sextant. But the boat evidently had carried a purely native crew, wherever they had come from, and I must think myself lucky to have a compass even. And, in any case, I could hardly keep going night and day; so, actually, as long as I made lots of nothing, it mattered little about a degree of drift one way or the other.

As the sun rose I cast off from my moorings and made sail on the boat, waving my cap to the pen, heaving gently on the swell, a black spot in the red pathway of the orb, never doubting I should see it no more. It had served me well, and I felt like parting from an old friend as we headed away nearly due north with a flowing sheet, the cutter leaning over to it like a dog at a bone, and Nan standing under the foot of the foresail—a fine figure of a goat, now with filled-out sides and glossy hair, chewing her cud and keeping a sharp lookout to windward. Without a doubt I owed my life to her, as but for the sound of her calling to me from the sea I had never seen the pen, swimming away from it as I was, and nearly at my last gasp. Once, when the water began to come in so rapidly, just after the storm, the thought had crossed my mind of how much lighter the pen would float if Nan was out of it. But the notion was no sooner conceived than put aside, with the conviction that no good fortune could ever attend such a miserably ungrateful action, either in this world or the next.

In my rummaging I had come across a couple of short clay pipes, quite new, also a stick or two of ship's tobacco, far more to my mind than the rank cigars. And now, as I sat at the tiller and smoked, whilst the boat ripped through the blue water, I felt pervade me a joyous

sense of hope and exhilaration indescribable, setting me to whistle and sing to the mere thrilling of it. Nor did my imagination play me any tricks concerning those two grim and blasted ones. If I had not, by any reason, been able to get rid of them, it might have been otherwise. But then, yards away, glistening wet with spray, was the boom to which the fiery bolt had fastened them, the good Kauri pine of it buckling to the tug of the sail, and all around the warm steady breeze and the blue sky, and the water and the life in it.

You see, I was young and healthy, with a perfect digestion; and I had company, also plenty of good food and drink. All the same, I shunned the darksome little den of a cabin, close and vile-smelling. Nor was there any need for its shelter, the weather keeping gloriously fine; the wind through the day steady but light, dying away at sundown, and giving place to soft airs, which scarce rippled the water heaving gently to the dark blue overhead studded with great constellations that glowed and burned and palpitated with a nearness and brilliancy I had never seen equalled.

What rather puzzled me was that, search as I might, I could find no clue to ownership about the boat or her belongings. Nowhere aboard of her was so much as a printed letter. On her stern she carried, in place of a name, a gilded device of a rising sun; and the same, in smaller size, was on each bow. She was copper-fastened throughout, and the tiller, of solid brass, was a fine piece of work running in a graceful curve to a dolphin's head. The sails were of light but very strong cotton; her spars of that grand wood, the Kauri pine of New Zealand. From a few indications about her, legible only to the eye of a seafarer, I judged her of French build. And in that at least the sequel proved me right.

A week passed without my sighting anything, the weather fine, but the winds growing perceptibly lighter, when one morning, taking my customary look around before casting off, I spied a gleam of canvas in the north-east. But I could make nothing more of it until noon, by which time I had risen the object sufficiently to see that it was a small painted-port brig under topgallant-sails, topsails, and foresail; and judging from the way her head fell off and came to, with a seeking sort of motion that reminded me of a dog nosing after a lost scent, steering any way. And as I neared her I saw that she was, as sailors say, 'all anyhow.' Only one small

dingey hung at her davits; no smoke poured from her galley funnel; no faces looked over her high bulwarks. A pretty creature of a brig, too, of some 300 tons, with a yacht-like bow, and clean run aft to a square stern; masts painted a buff colour tapering away up to gilded trucks; lofty and squarely rigged—too much so for my fancy—her copper glistening in the sun like a new kettle at each lazy roll, and all about her, to a sailor's mind, a touching air of loneliness and desertion, accentuated rather than relieved by the outstretched arm of a white female figurehead.

'A derelict, for a dollar, Nanny,' said I, luffing up as we got closer. 'Anyhow, I'll hail her;' and I shouted out, 'Brig ahoy!'

Listening, I imagined I heard some sort of reply, sounding muffled and dull.

'Brig ahoy!' I roared again. 'Is there anybody on board?'

And as I sat and stared, all at once, over the rail, forward of the main-rigging, came a head and stared back at me—a great round black-and-yellow head with eyes that glowed like balls of fire, and a big, open, red cavern of a mouth, showing white teeth, long, sharp, and cruel, and that answered my hail by such a deep, savage roar as made me jump to my feet and exclaim, 'The devil, Nan! If that's a specimen of her crew, I think we'll clear!' And Nan seemed to be of the same opinion; for, meeting those fierce green eyes, she gave a lamentable bleat and scuttled aft, and crouched between my legs as I hurriedly put the helm up and, very slowly, for the wind had nearly died away, drove astern. As I passed the brig's quarter I observed a rope's-end towing overboard, and having some desire to see more of this strange business, I caught hold, and finding it came handsomely off the deck, veered away until brought up, when I took a turn round the iron traveller of the foresail. Jumping to let go the gaff-halyards, I was startled by a voice overhead, and looking up, I saw a man's face poking out of one of the two little stern windows—a furiously red, choleric face fringed with bristling white whiskers; a stiff gray moustache sprang from under a big hooked nose; and from the shelter of shaggy eyebrows gleamed a pair of deep-set, light-blue eyes.

'Hi, hi, you, sir!' roared the voice. 'Confound it, are you deaf? Why, by gad, he's got my boat! What are you doing with my boat, eh, eh?'

Too much taken aback by this second surprise to answer at once, all I did was to stare at the

astonis  
plimen  
the sm  
vessel  
aft; o  
the sa  
this K  
floated  
with m  
weird  
unkno  
chang  
And  
for the  
when  
you'll  
longer  
'Ca  
voice  
don't  
'W  
face w  
windo  
pale b  
a perf  
doubl  
and fi  
'N  
ment,  
come  
only  
savag  
and  
tinue  
utter  
I sto  
up at  
—Ma  
us in  
here,  
Tipp  
shot  
Tipp  
off,  
swift  
took  
loud!  
'I  
short  
fell o  
here  
'?  
head  
—T  
Can



astounding apparition, as it returned the compliment with interest, framed like a picture in the small port which it almost filled. Was the vessel bewitched? Tiger amidships and madman aft; or both together? Or were they one and the same being? I protest that something of this kind went to make up the notions that floated through my brain at the moment, mingled with memories of sea-stories I had heard—strange, weird stories of haunted vessels wandering on unknown seas, manned by evil spirits, able to change their shapes at will.

And I must have shown it in my face, too, for the other one grinned as it shouted: 'Well, when you're done looking frightened, perhaps you'll come aboard and let us out. How much longer are we to be boxed up in this hole, eh, eh?' 'Can't say, I'm sure,' I retorted, finding my voice at last; 'you've got a deck passenger I don't much relish the cut of.'

'Why, confound it, sir! I crippled'—the face was beginning, when suddenly, at the other window, appeared another face—a girl's face, pale but beautiful, lit by great dark-brown eyes; a perfect nose, lips arched like a Cupid's bow over double rows of pearl, and a voice that rang sweet and firm and true as she interrupted the other.

'No,' said she eagerly as I gaped in amazement, looking, I dare say, foolish enough, 'don't come on board—at least not yet. Tippoo is only lame. He'd hurt you—he's become so savage since'—and here I saw her face blanch and a sort of shiver pass over it as she continued, more hurriedly, seeing, I suppose, the utter bewilderment impressed on my features as I stood holding on to the forestay and gaping up at her: 'There's no one here except my father—Major Fortescue—and myself. Our crew left us in that very boat, after shutting us up in here, trying to set fire to the brig, and letting Tippoo—that's the tiger—loose. My father shot some of the men, and afterwards smashed Tippoo's leg. But where,' she suddenly broke off, 'did you come from?' eyeing Nan with a swift look of surprise as the animal came and took up her place alongside me and bleated loudly at the strange faces.

'I was second mate of a ship,' I replied shortly, for I was all athirst to hear more; 'I fell overboard; and after drifting about with Nan here, I found the boat and two dead men in her.'

'The infernal scoundrels!' shouted the other head from its window; 'the murdering thieves!—There, there, Helen, you are so impatient! Can't you let the man tell his story without

constantly interrupting him!—Yes, sir,' he went on, his face turning so purple with rage at the remembrance of his troubles that I thought he'd choke every minute—'yes, sir; nothing but misfortunes since we left Colombo! First the captain died, then the mate. Then I took charge (she's my own ship, sir, cargo and all). Then the brutes of niggers mutinied' (I hardly wondered at it), 'and wanted to leave, saying the ship was doomed. I put two of 'em—the ringleaders—in irons with my own hands. Then, sir, one night they locked us up here and got the boat overboard, but not before I'd shot four or five of 'em. Gad, sir, if they hadn't cleared I'd ha' potted the lot at short range! They tried to set us afire, too. But it rained; and I kept 'em jumping with my big express; so they didn't do much at the fire business. And they let Tippoo loose—as quiet a cub as you ever saw—until, well, he's a man-eater now, and I dare say you'd better kill him before you come on board. No trouble; I broke his leg the other day. I'm glad my boat's proved of service to you, sir; and, eh, eh'—putting a glass to his eye—'gad, yes, your goat also.' All this he paid out as fast as he could reel it off, bringing up with a sudden sort of a gasp, quite plain to hear.

As he finished speaking, with a loud roar, there sprang on to the brig's taffrail a three-parts-grown tiger, lashing his tail in fury and swaying unsteadily on three legs to the motion of the vessel. His near front leg he kept bent upwards, with all that part between the knee and claws hanging loose. His regard was fixed on Nan, who shivered and bleated in terror. Fearing that he was about to spring, I slipped my line, and seeing that presently there would be some manœuvring, I hoisted the mainsail and foresail, put the helm up, and a light air filling the canvas, the cutter began to draw ahead.

'Don't desert us!' exclaimed the girl appealingly.

'No,' I said, 'I will not. But I don't quite see how I'm to get on board whilst that brute's there.'

'Can you shoot?' she asked.

'I'll try,' I said, 'although I haven't had much practice at big game. However, if you'll lower me down a rifle and some cartridges I may hit him.'

At this both heads withdrew, and in a minute or two the Major—to call him as I always did henceforth—had a stout line out of the window with some kind of firearm dangling from it. Giving the boat a sheer, I took her right across the brig's stern, not without some

apprehension of the tiger's making a flying leap ; but, owing to his broken leg, perhaps, he only growled in a menacing, low, throaty note. Clutching the gun and a bag of cartridges attached thereto, I drew out again from the *Hebe*—the brig's name in gilt letters on a blue scroll athwart her stern—and loaded. As luck would have it, I was not only something of a shot, but understood how to handle a rifle, and I heard the old Major grunt in a disappointed sort of a manner as I shoved the cartridges in.

Jibbing, I got the cutter round with her stern to the *Hebe's*, and taking careful aim, fired—and missed. The motion of the boat had been too much for me, and I saw the bullet knock chips off the rail a full foot to port of the brute, who at once disappeared.

'Never mind!' shouted the Major as I told him. 'Follow him up! He's cunning after my hitting him. Make the goat bleat—that'll fetch him!'

That I could do at any time by simply making to Nan ; and drawing ahead, I presently got another shot as the tiger, unable to resist the sound of the bleating, came to the rail amidships where I had first seen him. This time I was sure of a hit, for I heard the thud of the heavy bullet and the fierce growl as the brute fell back.

It was getting late in the afternoon, and quite tired of this game of hide-and-seek on the high seas, I determined, in the face of this last successful shot, to try and end it. So, making the long painter fast to the brig's mainchains, I scrambled into them, rifle in hand, and cautiously peered over the rail. There lay the tiger biting savagely at a wound in his shoulder, from which blood oozed in a thick stream. With a good rest for my rifle, I made no mistake this time, but sending the bullet into his head just below the eye, had the satisfaction of seeing him roll over and stretch out dead.

#### CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD THE 'HEBE.'



TEPPING on to the brig's deck, I looked around with not a little curiosity—after making quite sure that the tiger was dead. Almost the first thing to catch my eye was a great heap of oakum, old canvas, all well tarred and half consumed, lying on the mainhatch, between a big pair of wooden chocks, evidently formed for the reception of

just such a boat as lay alongside. The fire had burnt through the tarpaulins and charred the hatches, but had been extinguished before doing further damage—a very narrow squeak though. Close to the forward end of the hatch was a little galley ; farther along, a good-sized deck-house, painted white ; and the after-ends of both these structures were fairly riddled with bullet-holes. And everywhere about the deck lay scattered bones—fragments of human skulls, vertebrae, arms, and thighs, many of them crunched and broken, but all clean picked and dried by the hot sun. Still, the planking thereabouts looked like the floor of a slaughter-house, and the smell was an equal proportion of dissecting-room and menagerie combined.

There was no poop to the brig. The space was taken up by a house running right aft to the wheel, with a narrow alley-way on each side between it and the bulwarks. A handsome brass railing ran round the top of this sort of poop, to which there was no entrance from the quarter-deck. But I noticed a couple of small windows in its front with the glass in them smashed. Houses and fittings were immensely strong, and built with great solidity. Heavy semicircular double doors, fronting the wheel and binnacle, gave access by a few steps to the cabin ; and these doors had been secured by a kedge anchor and a couple of spare chain topsailsheets in such fashion that, opening outwards as they did, it would be an utter impossibility for any one within to move them. Indeed, it was fully a quarter of an hour before I was able to open them myself. But at last I flung them wide and pushed back the hood of the companion, and stepped aside, waiting with some curiosity the appearance of the prisoners.

First to emerge was the old gentleman whose features I already knew so well—a tall, rigid figure, dressed in a long frock-coat of some thin, dark material, immaculate linen with large diamond studs and sleeve-links, polished tan shoes, and a solar-topee as big as a beehive—altogether a most amazing spectacle under the circumstances.

Introducing himself as Major Fortescue, late of the 14th Bengal Native Infantry, he shook hands and, stepping to the taffrail, sniffed and snorted, and drew great breaths of air into his lungs, saying : 'Killed the beggar, hey? Well done! By gad, it's a treat to get out again!' Then, catching a whiff from the maindeck : 'Piff, pah! how those brutes smell yonder! Must get them cleared away presently.'

'How long have you been locked up down below?' I asked as we ascended the little ladder to the top of the deck-house, I meanwhile keeping an eye lifting for a sight of the girl, and wondering what was delaying her.

'Eight days,' said the Major, answering my question. 'Eight interminable days! Luckily we had plenty to eat and drink. But the heat was infernal! I've been coffee-planting in Ceylon. Gave it up, after a year or so. Doctors advised a sea-voyage for my daughter, who had been ailing for some time. So I bought the *Hebe* here, and loaded her with coffee for the Cape. Meant to sell ship and cargo there, and go home in the mail-boat. Nice mess it's turned out to be! Nothing, sir, but bad luck! Third week out the captain took ill, lingered another week, and died. That was bad enough! Then the mate fell from aloft and broke his thigh; mortification set in, and he died. Light winds, mostly ahead, and calms all the time. Then, sir, the coloured crew—ten of 'em—got rusty—swore the ship was accursed, and what not. But I know the nigger, sir; and I bounced 'em up to their work. You see, there wasn't another white on board now. But the *serang*, or boatswain, as you'd call him, knew how to sail the *Hebe*; and as I was a bit of a navigator, I thought we might pull through. But the brutes jibbed; and I had to knock the *serang* and the *tindal*—his mate—down, and put irons on them for drawing their knives on me. I dragged the pair into the bathroom there—pointing to a little sentry-box of a shop on the port side of the quarter-deck—and locked them in. But that night, Helen and myself being both below, the beggars rushed aft, let the two out, and fastened us up in the cabin. Then the brutes started to get the boat overboard, cockbiling the mainyard, as you see, and putting a tackle on it, whilst I was making good practice at them with my heavy express through those front windows. Gad, sir, it reminded me of the old Mutiny days! I drove 'em into the deck-house and out again, into the galley and out again. I had lots of ammunition, and didn't spare it. Four, I know, I accounted for. But then night came, dark as a dog's mouth, and it was only guess-work; and they got the boat over in spite of me. And before they went they lit a roaring fire on the hatch there, and loosed Tippoo, whom I was taking to a friend in Capetown. Helen and I did all we could to get out; but the house was too solid, and you can't cut teak with a table-knife. And all the

time the fire was flaming and blazing in such a fashion that it seemed as if nothing could save us from being roasted—not alive; I would have taken care of that—when down came a perfect deluge of rain and extinguished it. By then the boat must have been out of sight, or, surely, they had returned and finished their work. Helen couldn't bear to think of the tiger eating those bodies whose remains you see there; so, to please her, I tried to shoot him—an ungrateful act, as but for his scavenging they might have bred a pestilence. But after getting hit he went into his cage, and only came out o' nights. He was a quiet, tractable creature enough—we had him from the time he was a cub—but after his first taste of human flesh, of course, blood-thirsty as the rest of his tribe. And the niggers reckoned on this when they let him go, well knowing what an excellent sentry he'd make over us. Well, sir, I think that's all for the present;' and the Major turned and looked at me, a fine, well-set-up, soldierly figure of a man, but one you'd sooner expect to meet in a military club than on the deck of a derelict brig in the Indian Ocean.

I was going to make some remark, but just then I became aware of a graceful figure that had stepped up alongside us, and was holding out her hand to me, and looking at me scrutinisingly with those wonderful deep-brown eyes of hers.

A very gracious presence indeed was Helen Fortescue as she stood there, clad in a close-fitting dress of some soft gray stuff, with narrow white cuffs fastened by silver buttons at the wrists. Under her collar was knotted a blue silk kerchief, and on her head she wore a round straw hat trimmed with ribbon of the same colour. And she looked as dainty and fresh and spick-and-span as her father; indeed, the pair might have gone as they were to the swellest of garden-parties. Neither beauty nor age in distress was there a sign of! And still, they must have had a pretty trying experience.

All this time Nanny had been bleating loudly from the boat, missing me; and as we three walked on to the maindeck, the girl—she was only about twenty—picking her way repugantly, I jumped over, and placing Nan in the chains, which in the *Hebe* were large and roomy, I easily lifted her thence on board.

'Poor Tippoo, a bad ending for you!' the girl said as we passed the tiger. 'I had him when he was not much bigger than a kitten,' she explained to me. 'And until this awful

voyage'—and she looked around shuddering—'he was quite a pet, fond of me, and very quiet.'

'Perhaps, Mr Vallance' (I had told him my name when he introduced himself), here put in the Major very politely, 'you would not mind helping me to clear up these decks a little whilst Helen gets us something to eat? I am sorry to have seemed inhospitable. But, really, all we had to offer below there was some cold preserved stuffs and bitter beer. Our water gave out yesterday, and we had no means of cooking anything in the cabin. It was a great oversight on my part forgetting to bring a spirit-lamp. By the way, I once knew a Colonel Vallance—old crony of mine—Somersetshire man, I think. Any relative of yours?'

I replied that I thought he most likely was, as I had heard my father talking of a militant branch of the family settled near Taunton. This seemed to please the old boy excessively, and he rather dropped the curt, somewhat high and mighty style he had hitherto affected. But the question almost made me laugh, so ludicrously inapposite did it appear to our surroundings. However, we turned to with a will, tried open a big port there was amidships, dragged Tippoo over and through, and sent his collection of bones after him.

'That,' said the Major as he kicked a skull into the water, 'was Lal Mohammed the cook's, and a better hand at a curry never lived.'

'Where are the other boats, Major?' I asked presently as I bent on a bucket, and the Major stood ready, broom in hand and sleeves rolled up, to scrub whilst I drew water.

'There never were any more,' replied he. 'When I bought the *Hebe* she had lost all her boats in a storm, and none were procurable in Colombo, except the dingey yonder. So, acting on my agent's advice, I purchased the one you picked up from a French builder in Point de Galle. I always kept her well stocked with provisions, ready for an emergency. You found, I think you told me, plenty left?'

I said I had, and as we worked described the state of the boat more particularly than I had hitherto done.

'Aha!' said he, chuckling. 'Like Tippoo, the lot made a bad end. There must have been five or six in her; one or two, probably, wounded in the dark, for I kept at 'em. There was a nice breeze springing up as they left, I remember, because of its fanning the fire. By-and-by they became hungry and thirsty, and

they tackled the rum. Then the Nagapatam and the Tanjore men got drunk; knives were drawn, and they went for each other. Presently the *serang* and the *tindal* found themselves the only survivors of the fight. Those were the two fellows you found on the boom—the ring-leaders, the ones I put in irons. I can see the whole affair as plainly as possible. And I am pleased, sir, for they were an uncommon bad crowd. Fancy a nigger drawing his knife on me!'

'I think I'll pass the boat astern,' I said. 'Perhaps we may get her up later on. But I doubt it. She's too heavy.'

'Very well,' he replied; 'I don't want to lose her. Still, if we can't manage to lift her, she must go. Can't tow a boat like that if heavy weather comes.'

'No,' I thought to myself as I took the painter aft; 'there'll be other matters we shall lose if it comes on to blow!' and I glanced at the spread of canvas aloft, flattening itself into the masts and then suddenly banging out again. The painter was too short to give her drift enough, I found; so, for the present, I hauled in and bent on to it the rope's-end I had hung on to before I boarded the brig, which happened to be the sheet of the main-trysail boom.

When I came for'ard again matters looked more ship-shape. The decks, though far from clean, were at least clear; there was also a cheering sound of dishes rattling in the galley. And as I peeped in with an offer of help, I saw Miss Fortescue, busy in front of the stove, with a big white apron on.

'No, thank you,' said she, smiling, when I volunteered. 'I'm a soldier's daughter; and I'm glad to say that he brought me up to be useful as well as ornamental.'

'That's so, Vallance,' said the old chap, at work alongside with a basin of soap and water. 'Helen's not quite a ti-tum-tiddledy girl, as I call 'em—only able to strum on the piano, talk nonsense, and be more or less saucy to their elders.—And' (to his daughter), 'my dear, I think, as you and I at least have had enough of the cabin, and the night's fine, we'll take tea on the deck-house.'

'Very well, then,' I put in; 'and while it's preparing, don't you think, Major, I might as well clew up and furl those topgallant-sails? It won't take me long, and we can't be too snug.'

'Certainly, if you think it necessary,' replied he. 'Sorry I can't go aloft; but at all events I can pull and haul as well as any two Lascars.'



So pretty soon I was perched aloft on the fore topgallant-yard, and quickly had the sail snugged. Then down I came and clewed up the main, helped by the Major, who well justified his boast, for he was a muscular, hearty old man. When I reached the deck again it was still light, and I found that the others had set out quite an appetising repast on the roof of the after-house. Camp-stools and a table appeared from somewhere; and as I took my place I felt rather ashamed of my sun and salt stained attire, compared with these well-dressed people and the appurtenances of civilisation surrounding them; unable either, at times, to realise that the brig had lately been the scene of a terrible tragedy, and that the calm, scrupulously-dressed old gentleman sitting opposite me had been one of the chief actors in it, shooting down his fellow-creatures like rabbits. A tight hand the Major, without a doubt; and perhaps, I thought to myself, it wasn't such a wonder, considering, that his 'niggers' should have preferred his room to his company and his 'bossing'! All the same, I couldn't forgive them for trying to roast his daughter, whose soft eyes, as I now told my story in a more connected form, rested on me, I thought, with looks of sympathy and interest.

'By gad, sir,' commented the Major as I finished, 'as narrow an escape as I ever heard of in my life! And the goat—why, she saved you!'

'How glad I am, after all, that they did take the boat!' said the girl gently; and the tone in which she spoke made my heart jump. Then the talk drifted.

'Yes,' said the Major, 'I gave £700 for the *Hebe*, and the cargo's worth another £1200. But I would gladly take her price now for the lot, and cry quits. I'm afraid, as a speculation, it's going to turn out unsatisfactory. We're nearly seven weeks out to-day. Where we are I don't know. My last observation made us longitude 77° 39', latitude 15° 20'. But Heaven only knows where we've wandered to since then! We'll see to-morrow, anyhow. Helen, my love, this curry is not up to Lal Mohammed's. He was an artist; and I'm half sorry now I potted him.'

I stared; but I soon realised that the Major was quite in earnest. Glancing at the girl, I saw her smile faintly as I caught her eye; and I blushed, feeling that she read my thoughts in my face. Honestly, I was inclined to be vexed at the self-absorbed particularity about

trifles shown by a man who had just narrowly escaped from a very unpleasant adventure, to put it mildly, and who was probably on the eve of others. Also, with my sodden clothes and bare feet, I was ill at ease in such fine company. You will remember that I was young, and that I had seen little of the world beyond my ships and my father's vicarage. Thus the Major's pignicketiness (I can find no better word) half amazed, half disgusted me; and I think, I repeat, that his daughter saw it, and also intuitively guessed how I felt respecting that matter of outward seeming; for she said presently: 'Mr Vallance, I have taken the liberty of making poor Captain Davis's berth ready for you. I'm almost sure his clothes will fit you. I found some, nearly new, and put them out. You have had a much harder time than we two, so will please go and try the things on, and then take a rest.'

This was thoughtful indeed, and I said as much, adding that, as for rest, I was in no need of it; and that, not knowing the moment the long spell of fine weather might break, I meant to sleep on deck. Even now there was a light air sneaking about that it might pay to trim the yards to.

But my ideas jumped well to that notion of a clean rig-out, and I made my way down (for the cabin was really below the level of the deck) into a very handsome little sea-parlour, lit by a swinging lamp; for it was, by this, dark under hatches, although a nearly full moon had risen, and on deck it was almost as bright as day. I found the berth and the clothes—a good suit of light tweeds; and not only these, but a full equipment of underclothing and a pair of canvas shoes. And everything fitted fairly well. There were razors too, and being able, as most sailors are, to shave by touch alone, I soon had a week's stubble off my chin. There was a glass, but the berth-lamp was too dim. However, I made a fair job of it, and what with that and the clean shift, felt a new man all over.

When I went on deck again the pair were still sitting in the moonlight. Miss Fortescue, as I stood before them, just stared as at a stranger, then smiled; and the Major, putting up his glass, remarked: 'Well, by gad, here's a sea-change, eh, eh? Why, now, that's something like, eh, Helen?'

Then for an hour longer, all the wind having died away, we sat discussing our chances of finding help to work the brig; and the Major dozing off after his last glass of wine, we two

others talked together like very old friends—she telling me about the dismally dreary time they had of it below after the mutineers left the brig, together with something of their former life, from which I gathered that the Major must be fairly well to do. She herself had left England to join him at her mother's death, being then a mere child. Three years ago her father had retired on half-pay; but, in place of settling down comfortably, he had chosen to roam all over the East, carrying his daughter with him; speculating a little, trading a little, and, until this last venture, apparently making money.

And presently she drew me on to talk about the dear old people at home, and the quiet parsonage, and the village buried amongst apple-orchards, and deep lanes of hazel and hawthorn, far from the sound of the sea. And she listened, it seemed to me, with something of eager longing in her eyes, as of one who asked nothing better than such restful life in such a land. Everywhere was almost absolute stillness. Not a sail stirred. The water was like glass, without a ripple. Over the royal mast-head swam the moon, making of the brig a silver model swimming in a silver sea. Opposite to us the Major breathed heavily; between us Nan chewed her cud, stopping at times to nose the delicate white hand that played amongst her hair.

For long the silence reigned unbroken, the girl gazing out to sea with fixed, unconscious eyes; myself watching the perfect features thrown into full relief, as her hat, tilted back and allowing a few stray curls to wander down the broad, white forehead, brought the sweet face out of its shadow. Our mutual reverie was interrupted prosaically by the Major choking with a horrible sound that made us start. And then we found out how late it was; and the Major called for hot water, and insisted on brewing a night-cap. So Helen and I went to the galley together and revived the dying fire, and filled the kettle and brought it aft. Then I bundled a mattress and some rugs up from the skipper's berth; whilst the others, with many good-nights, went below to their own—the Major sleepily asking to be called if a change came. 'Helen can steer, mind you,' said he; 'and so can I. We'll keep watch and watch when the wind comes, Vallance.'

And I replied formally and obediently, 'Ay, ay, sir!' smiling to myself at such a soldier-like formula, and thinking that it would be very long before I got tired of at least one of my

watch-mates. Ay, verily, this last trip of mine was making up abundantly for all the eight years' dullness of seafaring I had been wont to wonder and grumble at!

Alongside the little bathroom was a snug corner, sheltered from the dew by the overhanging edge of the deck-house. There I spread my mattress, and stretching out, lit one of the Major's cigars and thought of many things, but mostly of the fairest girl I had ever seen—his daughter Helen.

Then, dozing, I heard the clip, clip, of Nan's hoofs along the deck as she searched for me, and presently snuggled down like a dog at my feet. I had many dreams that night; but all were pleasant, and athwart them all moved a woman's face—the face I had watched so long in the moonlight. Yes, I was indeed far gone in my first love!

## CHAPTER V.

### WE LOSE THE MAJOR.



AWOKE at daylight, after a very sound and pleasant night's sleep. No one else was stirring, and I had a good wash, lit the galley fire and a pipe, milked Nan, and went on the fore-castle-head. The weather was still the same, and the brig had not steerage-way on her. Running out to the jib-boom-end, I got a good view of the vessel, and thought that the Major had bought her a bargain—for a prettier model of a little ship I never clapped eyes on. Coming inboard, I looked into the fore-castle—the large house on deck. But there was nothing to be seen save the usual array of bunks, a few bags, one chest, and any number of native mats, pipes, &c. The after bulkhead was full of bullet-holes, evidently made by heavy metal (four ounce, as I found later on), for many of the balls had gone clean through the galley first and then into the fore-castle. No wonder the poor devils left hurriedly, I thought, under such a bombardment. And except Tippoo's great cage—larger than Nan's even—there was absolutely no shelter about the decks for a crowd of men.

That mainyard all askew offended my eye, and setting to work, I presently squared it by the lifts and braces, and running aloft, sent the tackle down, knowing it was quite useless for three of us to attempt to heave-in a two-ton boat, even with the help of the winch. By the

time I had arranged these little matters the sun rose red and very angry-looking, with the whole eastern sky aflame—promise of a regular scorcher of a day. There was a small furled awning aft, and I cast it adrift and was spreading it, when Helen Fortescue came on deck.

'Oh,' she said, glancing forward and aloft as she shook hands, 'how busy you have been, Mr Vallance! I feel quite a sluggard. My father is not awake yet. The excitement of yesterday has tired him, I think. Now I will go into the galley and see about breakfast.'

I noticed that she had a pair of rough gloves and her apron ready to put on; and it struck me forcibly as she walked forward, with her fine lithe figure adapting itself unconsciously to the light roll of the brig, that there, indeed, was a girl with no thought of shirking work about her, good blood showing in every feature and trait—ready, with the man she loved, to meet any hap the world might hold for them.

Presently up came the Major, looking brisk and lively, and cocking a sort of soldier-sailor eye knowingly aloft and around.

'Hot day, sir,' he said; 'hot as blazes;' and without further ado he hopped on to the rail and began tying the awning-points. Then we stood aft looking at the boat.

'Yes,' said the Major, 'she must go, as you say. It would take all the hands that are away to hoist her in. Oh, well, some poor devil, even as you did, may drift across her. But we'll let her hang on for a while anyhow. Help may come.'

'Shall I take anything out of her?' I asked.

'Not a thing,' replied the Major. 'You know what somebody—I forget who—said about casting bread upon the waters. By gad, sir, when you came across our stern yesterday I was flabbergasted to see my boat again, with such a big loaf in it. I wonder whether the thing could possibly happen twice?' and the old chap laughed, not being able to see into the future. And in view of his Christian-like behaviour in the matter of her stores, I refrained from pointing out that his parallel wouldn't stand good, for in the former instance boat and bread had been set adrift without any consent of his.

It was very awkward having no door in front of the deck-house, as everything had to be brought aft by the narrow alley-way between it and the bulwarks. So, while the fine weather lasted, we decided to take our meals under the awning. Thus we breakfasted, with much talk of our position, not at all uncheerful. I was

pleased to find that there were two sextants on board; also that the Major, with some foresight, had kept the chronometer going. After the meal I suggested that we should clew up the foresail, and the Major assenting, we had a half-hour's heavy pulling, after which I went aloft and in some sort managed to stow it—a regular hard-weather stow—frapping a lump of canvas to the yard wherever I could get a hold. It was a big sail, and took me a long time to handle, even in such a fashion. But I managed it at last. And when I came down, although pretty well knocked up, it was in much better humour with the brig under a couple of topsails and fore-topmast staysail; and for after canvas I could set the mizzen, close reefed.

Miss Fortescue was at work in the cabin, and the Major sat at the galley door peeling sweet potatoes, making things look a bit homelike, although the white shirt, solar-topee, yellow boots, and diamonds put a touch of incongruity into the scene that made me nearly laugh outright.

'I'm an old campaigner, Mr Vallance,' said he as I approached, 'and I've seen some ups and downs in the world. But I can assure you, sir, that I don't think I ever felt so glad as I did when you appeared under the *Hebe's* stern and came to the rescue. Let me tell you, sir, that it was a plucky thing in you to board the brig, as you did, with a wounded man-eater at large on her decks; and if I haven't, Mr Vallance,' he went on, much to my discomposure, 'thanked you as I ought to have done, I sincerely apologise, and in my own and my daughter's name do so now;' and rising, he made me a most genteel bow, whilst all the potato-parings went out of his apron, greatly to Nan's delight. Returning the Major's salutation to the best of my ability, we shook hands, and I felt that last night I had done the old man an injustice in thinking him either selfish or unfeeling.

At six bells (11 A.M.) a gentle breeze sprang up and sent us through the water at a three-knot rate; and presently the Major, sending Helen to the wheel to relieve me, brought up the sextants and, with no little show of pride, began to screw the sun down.

'You take the other one, Mr Vallance,' said he, 'and check me. I'm not a professional, you know,' he went on, squinting through the glasses, 'but I don't think I'll be far out.'

But it was all I could do to take my eyes off that most graceful figure of a helmswoman,

swaying her lissome shape to the working of the spokes as if to the manner born, glancing at me now and again, with a sort of shy smile that seemed to my sanguine heart already to hold affection in it as well as friendship.

'Eight bells! Eight bells!' simultaneously from each of us; and away we went below to work out our reckoning. As luck would have it, and to the Major's extreme delight, there was only about a mile difference between us. Our longitude was 66° 5' east, latitude 29° 10' south, by which it will be seen that the brig's progress since the Major's last observation had been mostly all westing, which was so much the better for us. Getting out a chart, I found our position on it, making us on a west-by-south course, 1500 miles from Cape Agulhas, and only 120 miles east of the island of Rodriguez. But there was nothing to call there for. And these at least, if my memory serves me aright, were the results of my first sights taken on board the *Hebe*.

The wind was westerly, with a little nothing in it; and bracing the yards in, we found that the brig would easily lie her course with a few points to spare, and that, even under such short canvas, when we managed to get a cast of the log—Helen at the wheel, holding the glass—she was sailing no less than six knots. This was truly wonderful; and I realised that I was on a clipper, and the fastest one I had ever been shipmates with.

'She steers beautifully,' said Helen when I offered to relieve her, 'and I like being here. Of course the boat bothers her a little; and I suppose, if it comes on to blow, it must go.'

'I'm afraid it must go in any case,' I replied. 'But there's no particular hurry; and any minute something may heave in sight.'

Opening a little signal-locker, I took out from amongst the flags a small British merchant ensign, and asked the Major if I might hoist it as a distress signal (I had done nothing whatever hitherto on the *Hebe* without first consulting him).

'Do exactly what you think proper, Mr Vallance,' he replied, setting down a great round of boiled beef that he had brought from the galley. 'You're our practical man, although, as you see, you're not going to have the navigation part of the business all to yourself;' and he chuckled, and stood watching as I bent the flag on, union down, and hoisted it half-way up the signal-halyards, rove at the end of the mizzen-gaff.

'There,' said I, 'if any ship sights that, she'll know we want something, even if our canvas isn't enough to tell her.'

'My father thinks navigation is his strong point,' remarked Helen, with a smile, as the Major tramped back to the galley. 'This is not his first trip to sea, you must know. Once he owned a share in a Calcutta steamer, and made a voyage in her. He took up the science then; and when poor Captain Davis and Mr Skinner, the mate, were alive, he always used to help them with their observations.'

'You must have had a very anxious time with so much sickness on board,' I said.

'It was indeed a terribly anxious time,' replied Helen. 'The captain died quietly one night, without any one knowing it at the moment. But Mr Skinner was delirious for some days, and kept constantly calling for me, never seeming easy unless I was with him.'

'Was he a young man?' I asked, with a sort of empty feeling somewhere inside me.

'No, poor dear, he was not,' answered she, smiling. 'Old enough to be my grandfather, and quite gray. But,' she added, perhaps on seeing how my face lightened, 'I was very fond of him, and of the captain too—who leaves a wife and child at Point de Galle.'

After dinner, finding that the brig steered a bit wild without any canvas aft, I set the mizzen—a mere rag with its close reef, but quite enough. Then, whilst the Major took the wheel, I slung a pair of binoculars across my shoulders and went on to the main-royal yard in order to get a good look round.

I have said, I think, that the *Hebe* was lofty—over-sparred, indeed, in my opinion—and from the elevation I had attained she seemed a mere toy of a vessel underneath me. To set the mizzen I had been obliged to remove the awning, and thus had a clear view of her decks, looking solitary enough; for Helen had gone below, and the only person visible was the old Major, making a very different picture to his daughter, as he stood bolt upright like a sentry on duty, one eye on the compass, the other on the weather-leach of the main-topsail. As, presently, I swept the sea-line, some low, black object jumped into the field of the glass. For a time I worked away at it, but without avail. It might be a capsized boat, or a buoy, or a lump of wreckage—more likely the last—for anything I could make of it. It was broad on the weather bow; and hailing the deck, I motioned the Major to keep the brig off a few points



until she pointed straight for the thing. Then, making sure there was nothing else in sight, I descended and told the Major, who became quite excited and called his daughter. But we had not risen it from the deck yet. Indeed, from the smallness of the object, I did not expect we should until close upon it. Helen and I went on to the fore-castle-head, there to get a better view; and all at once she cried: 'I see it; it's a bit of a ship!' But, using the glass, the thing looked strangely familiar to me.

'By heavens!' I exclaimed suddenly, 'if that's not mine and Nan's old pen, call me a Dutchman! I ought to know it!'

And so it proved to be; and as it came washing and bobbing heavily by, we went aft again and had a good view. It was just as I left it, floating face upwards; and it took very little imagination on my part to stretch me on it drenched and gasping, and to feel once more the comfort of touch that Nan's warm flesh gave to my chilled body.

'By gad!' exclaimed the Major after a long stare through his glass, luffing to his course, 'fancy a man on that thing, wallowing about in mid-ocean with a goat for his crew, and a lump of sodden biscuit in the lazarette! Why, Vallance, you must have thought our boat the outcome of a miracle! What did you do?'

'Well, Major,' I answered after some hesitation, 'I went down on my knees and thanked God for sending her to me, as well as I could manage it.'

'The very best thing, too, you could have done,' replied the Major heartily, and rather to my relief. 'It's only on some such occasion that we sailors and soldiers ever think of Him.'

Towards evening the breeze freshened a bit, and we held a council. My opinion was that through the night we should heave-to, as the mere keeping any sort of watch was, with our numbers, out of the question. It would, I argued, only entail an amount of fatigue, rendering us useless and knocked up in case we should be called upon suddenly to make some supreme effort.

But the Major was opposed to this view completely. 'We are three,' said he. 'Four hours each. Constant lookout, night and day. Helen can do her share as well as any of us. We must keep going.'

I was about to expostulate, when a glance from Helen decided me to remain silent. Besides, was not the Major owner and skipper too? And, anyhow, what business had a poor devil of a

second mate, whose clothes even didn't belong to him, to interfere in the matter? But it angered me to think of a girl like Helen Fortescue having to stand at the wheel until she was ready to drop. However, I thought it wise to lie low and let the Major see how the thing would work, especially as he said he would take the first watch from eight o'clock until twelve; and I had an idea, from the look of the sky, that ere then there might be a change. And presently, after getting a spare line and bending it on to the boat's painter in place of the boom-sheet, so as to give her a fair drift, I relieved the Major to go and get his tea below. It was already nearly eight bells, and he was soon on deck again. 'I shall let her go, Vallance,' said he, pointing to the boat, 'if the wind freshens any more. We can't have her tailing on to us. It will mean another half-knot. Besides, it'll make a difference in the steering.'

In the cabin I found Helen waiting tea for me. For the size of the brig, it was really a large apartment, running her full width but for two state-rooms aft, two forward for the officers, and a box of a pantry. Handsomely panelled and carpeted, well lit, with plenty of glass and silver-ware on a broad sideboard, it looked especially snug and cosy; fairly cool, too, with the bull's-eye windows along the upper part of the house all open. But the principal attraction to me, although noting these details with a careless glance, was the girl, her hair gathered into a mass of dark, shining coils around the small and shapely head—the first time I had had a good view of it without a hat on—who smiled a welcome to me across the well-spread tea-table.

'My father,' said she after we had talked a while, 'thinks it possible, apparently, that we three can carry the *Hebe* to Capetown; and although I did not like to tell him so, I hardly think it likely. Do you?'

'Not unless we get a fair wind, and one of about the strength of this, all the way there,' I replied, laughing; 'and even then, keeping regular watch and watch night and day, only our skeletons would be left by the time we sighted Agulhas. It sounds feasible enough theoretically, but practically, even with the small canvas we carry now, there would be constant callings for all hands. The brig is heavily sparred, and even to trim the yards in any sort of a breeze would take the three of us all we could do. In fact, watch and watch, as we are now, means night and day work for all of us.'

'I thought as much,' said she, 'and saw you were going to protest. But when my father has set his mind on a thing, it is better to let him try it. When he sees that it will not act, then he will be the first to acknowledge it.'

'I have the next watch—the middle one,' I said presently. 'That leaves me to call you. How shall I manage?'

'If you will stamp on the deck,' she replied; 'my berth is there, you see, exactly under the wheel. I am a sound sleeper, but I think I shall be able to hear you. If I do not—well, you can't leave the brig to steer herself, or you might run down and knock at the door. It really does seem rather absurd! All of us ought to sleep on deck within easy call. But father does not care about the open air at nights; nor, to tell the truth, do I. What a crew!' and she laughed merrily.

'Yes, even were we three tough and seasoned sailors,' I said, 'it would be as much or more than we could manage to work the *Hebe* to Capetown. But now!'

'I loved the sea,' said Helen, 'and I love it still. But I do not think, if we get safely to any port, that, after this experience, I should care about trusting myself to its tender mercies again. It has not used me too well. And, as you know, the voyage was planned especially for my benefit. Doubtless my health is as good as ever now; but at what a terrible cost!' and she shuddered as at evil memories, and I saw tears rise to her eyes.

'It was all the fault of those rascally Lascars,' I remarked after a pause. 'You would have done well enough with white seamen. Think of the brutes leaving you to roast alive!'

'Yes, it was cruel,' she answered. 'Still, Mr Vallance, my father, though generally the soul of gentleness with his own colour, like many old Indians has no patience with the native; and when the captain and the mate died'—

'Yes,' I said quickly, for I had thoroughly imagined, long ere this, the sight of the Major bossing his 'niggers.' 'But why, I wonder, did they not put yourself and the Major into the boat, and themselves stick to the brig?'

'Doubtless they would have done so,' said Helen; 'but, as I heard them say over and over again, they imagined that a curse lay upon the *Hebe*, that a fearful plague was stowed away amongst the coffee, and that we were doomed to wander about the sea until all died.'

'A prophecy pretty well fulfilled in their case,

anyhow,' said I. 'And now I think I will go on deck and turn in, or my watch will be out.'

For a few minutes I stood talking to the Major at the wheel. The wind was steady, the brig lying her course and going through the water in good style, although, as I judged, bothered by the swing of the boat behind her. Getting the side-lights out, I retrimmed them and put fresh oil in; then, going on to the fore-castle, I lit my pipe, and after a long look round, carried my mattress from the quarter-deck and sat down and smoked, Nan, as usual, lying at my feet. The night seemed fine enough for anything, and the barometer, as I had glanced at it before leaving the cabin, was, if moving at all, on the rise. Still, instinct at times, if rarely, is more to be depended upon than any mere instrument, and I felt somehow that a change was pending—of what nature I could not be sure. However, pretty certain that not much harm could come to us aloft, although a reef in each topsail would have added to my sense of security, I lay down.

Finding presently that there was rather too much wind for comfort rushing out of the fore-topmast staysail, I shifted my quarters on to the main-deck, and took shelter under the lee of the fore-castle. Here I spread my mattress afresh, and pulling a rug over my head to keep off the moonbeams, I dozed off to sleep, my last waking thoughts being that the wind had taken a shriller note up there in the rigging, causing the *Hebe*, hitherto as upright as a factory chimney, to have a slight list, so that before midnight it was just possible I might find myself in the lee-scutters. But I was too nearly asleep to go to the trouble of another shift. And I dreamt—naturally enough perhaps—that I was once again on the pen with Nan, only this time the water kept pouring in in such volume that I could plainly hear it above all the raging of the storm; and as I lay listening to the noise of it, and of Nan's wailings as she vainly strove to free herself, I awoke suddenly, bewildered, to find myself and the decks a-wash, Nan bleating on the spare spars to leeward; the brig flat a-back and nearly on her beam-ends, and a full gale of wind roaring and yelling aloft.

Staggering to windward, I ran aft. There was no one at the wheel. Putting it hard up and slipping the becket over a spoke to keep it there, I raced forward, and flattening in the staysail sheet, had presently the satisfaction to feel the *Hebe* paying off and the sails filling

again. Back to the wheel, and in a few minutes I had her again on her course. Lucky it was that we had no more canvas set, or it would have been 'Good-bye, *Hebe* !'

But where was the Major? Not forward, I was nearly certain; and surely he would not have gone below without first calling me! I had left a clear sky, when I fell asleep, beginning to fill with moonlight. Now it was covered with dark clouds, and there was, too, quite a tumble of a sea on. And where was the Major?

All at once, glancing astern, I, notwithstanding the gloom, saw that the boat was gone, and I started as if I had received a galvanic shock with the premonition of evil that suddenly struck me. Then I stamped violently on the deck. But my shoes were too light; so, catching up the grating, I rammed away with it until a tall figure rose through the companion. At first I thought it was the Major's. But a voice, singularly unlike his, with the suspicion of a laugh in it, said: 'It is only two o'clock yet, Mr Vallance!' And then I saw that it was his daughter.

'Will you please see if the Major is in his berth?' I said. 'I have only just come to the wheel. Waking, I found the ship a-back and the boat gone.'

Without a word, she sped below again.

'No,' she said, reappearing presently, and speaking with a sort of despairing quiver in her voice, 'he is not in the cabin. Can he be forward, do you think, Mr Vallance?'

'If you will take the wheel, I'll search the vessel,' I replied. And as she came to me and grasped the spokes I could hear her bravely attempting to choke back a sob. Longing to take her in my arms and comfort her—for, instinctively, I felt that the worst had happened—but without trusting myself to speak, I raced to the galley. Empty! So was the fore-castle! So was every corner about the decks! The Major and the *Hebe* had parted company. Certain of this, I let go the main-topsail-halyards and hauled on the clew-lines until I got the yard as far down as I could. Then backing the fore-topsail yard, I practically had the brig hove-to. Next taking out the port side-light, I carried it aft, and bending it on to the signal-halyards, ran it up to the gaff-end. Then going below, in a minute I returned with the big express rifle and all the cartridges I could find, and loading, began to fire rapidly. All this I did with such desperate energy as left me breathless. Nor all the time did the

dim figure at the wheel move or speak. But now, as I stood beside her, she exclaimed in an indescribable accent of misery and distress: 'Oh, my father! my dear father!'

'Let us hope for the best, Miss Fortescue,' I said. 'I believe myself he is in the boat, and that if it was light he would still be in sight. Evidently finding that it interfered with his steering, he was leaning over—having hauled up the boat—and had just cast adrift the end of the painter when he overbalanced and fell. Look; ' and I pulled in the rope that I had myself bent on the night before—a piece of stout, new line, its end still retaining the half-shape of the carrick-bend I had used to fasten it. So I tried to cheer and comfort her, although, God knows, my own hopes were of the slightest. The Major may have hit the boat in falling (and this was my chief fear), or she might have slipped away too rapidly for him to swim to her. And he was far from a young man; also, as I supposed, short-sighted. But as I took her away from the wheel and secured it amidships, and made her sit down on the raised grating, I did my best to appear hopeful—nay, certain of seeing the boat with the Major in her again at daylight; pointing out, too, that the squall—for it was nothing else, although a precious heavy one—was now over, and that we could not be very far from the spot, with the *Hebe* making no progress.

And talking thus, firing at intervals out of the big rifle—the same that had done such dire execution amongst the crew—I gradually drew her to think more hopefully; although, as I sat close beside her, I could feel a shudder pass through her frame every now and again, and the sight of the set, pale face, staring always astern, made my very heart sore.

Thinking, from her frequent shivering, that she might feel cold, although the night was a warm enough one, I ran down and got a wrap and placed it over her shoulders where she sat; and, as she thanked me, I could hear that she had been crying quietly to herself. And presently she rose and asked me if she couldn't be of some use; and I, knowing that occupation of any kind would be good for her, asked her to get more cartridges, if she could find them, also to trim the red light, which I now hauled down, as it was burning dimly. Then, dark though it was, for the moon was hidden behind a heavy cloud-bank, I slung on the binoculars and went aloft, more for the sake of doing something than because I thought it of any avail. What

I wanted to know was, how soon after I left him did the Major go overboard? It was a question no one could answer. But I was afraid not very long; and in that case it must have happened some hours—hours during which the brig, before the shifting squall struck her, was probably coming to and falling off, but still making headway.

And stare as I might, all that the glass gave me was a heaving field of black water. After that fierce and sudden burst the wind had fallen quite light, although I fancied there was more to follow before very long.

By the time I reached the deck Helen had fixed up the lamp and got it ready to hoist. She also handed me a few cartridges, saying that these were the last. But beyond one swift glance at my face in the red glow of the lamp as we stood facing each other, she asked no questions. Truly it was a brave heart! I only hoped it would not break with the long, miserable waiting for a dawn that seemed as if it never meant to come again.

But it came at last, as most things must, and once the first faint streaks showed, it seemed only a minute until the whole eastern sky was alight with colour. Swinging into the rigging, I was soon perched in the main-royal yard, sweeping the horizon with my glasses.

All around, except where that gloomy cloud-bank still kept its position to the north, the ocean was clear—too clear, alas! Free from the least speck. But I waited for the sun to fully show himself before descending. And even then, when there was no excuse for remaining longer, I hung aloft, dreading to go down and face those eyes, following my every motion so hungrily from the deck.

I need not have been frightened. Helen Fortescue was of the wrong material to make a scene, young as she was. But when I saw what that night's waiting had done for her, I protest I felt ready to set her an example, and cry out and shed tears myself. And I think she must have seen something of the sort in my face, for as she came forward she put her hand in mine and said: 'No hope? No; I feared there could not be!' And when I, being unable to speak with the sight of the great sorrow in that haggard, woe-begone face, could only point to the dark and threatening cloud-bank, as much as to say, 'He might be there,' she but shook her head sadly, saying: 'I fear not. Heaven help me, I have lost my father, the only friend I had in the world!'

But at that I found my tongue, albeit just then an unsteady member, and said: 'Not the only one, as long as I am alive, Miss Fortescue;' and, moved by strong emotion, I carried the hand I still held to my lips. I saw a faint tinge of colour come into her face as she slowly withdrew it from my grasp. But she simply said: 'Thank you, Mr Vallance. I am sure of it.' And seeing that she looked at the companion with a sort of longing in her eyes, I gently supported her trembling footsteps to it, and closed the doors behind her as she went down the little stairway, thinking that she would wish, as much as possible, to be alone with her sorrow. And, I can tell you, my own heart was heavy enough that morning as I went forward to light the fire and feed Nan. I had begun to like the Major, spite of his crotchety ways, and I missed his rather imposing presence about the deck. Nor had I much hope of his safety. Yet often his speech about the boat, and his refusing to let any of the things be taken out of her, recurred to me with a kind of insistent idea that, although unconsciously, he must have had some kind of prevision of what was to happen, and that *ergo* he should be in her at that moment.

'Bad and unsatisfactory logic, Nan,' I said, going back to my old habit. 'God help him! I'm afraid we shall never see the poor Major any more.'

## CHAPTER VI.

### MY SWEET SHIPMATE.



ELEN did not stay below very long; and when she reappeared, although still haggard and tear-worn, she looked more composed and resigned. But although she spoke little, she insisted on getting the breakfast ready and busying herself about galley and pantry as usual.

Seeing this, and that it would not take much to start the tears going again, I once more went aloft with the glass to get a lookout; and presently, away on the port bow, I saw the white glimpse of canvas—just enough to swear to, but no more. Whilst I was on the royal yard a faint breeze came along, and, descending, I clapped a jigger on the fore-topsail-halyards and started to mast-head the heavy yard. Helen, hearing me, came out to help, putting all her weight into the pull when I gave the



word. But, as I might have known, it was too much for us. So, procuring a notched-block, I led the jigger-fall to the winch, and, with Helen holding on, I managed to, in some sort, get the yard nearly up. We served the main one the same way; and presently Helen brought my breakfast to the wheel, eating, I noticed, nothing herself.

During the morning the vessel I had caught sight of turned out to be a small barque, coming directly for us. And, indeed, the spectacle of the *Hebe* in such weather, under her too badly set bulging topsails, to say nothing of the reversed ensign blowing out from the halyards, and general all-round look of forlornness, would have been enough to attract a ship's attention and make her alter her course in any seas.

As the two vessels neared each other, the stranger backed his mainyards and lay-to within a couple of hundred yards of us—a pretty enough picture of a modern iron clipper, wedge-shaped, wire-rigged, and steel-sparred, as she rolled lightly, showing her bright-red composition-painted bottom glistening wet to the meeting of the black top-sides, whilst her snow-white canvas billowed tremblingly from lofty royal, double topgallant, and double-topsail yards down to her great courses, as if in protest of delay. She swam light, with her Plimsoll mark well out of the water, and looked to be in ballast, or very nearly so. Two persons stood on the poop; and one of them, a red-whiskered, red-faced, stout man, after a long stare at the *Hebe* and her fair helmswoman—for I had been busy about our yards—hailed.

'What brig's that,' he shouted, 'an' what's the matter wi' ye?'

In as few words as possible I told him, asked if he had seen anything of a boat adrift, and wound up—almost hopeless as I knew it must be—by asking him if he could spare us a couple of hands.

I cared nothing about his name or whither he was going; but he replied: 'This is the *Aurora* o' Glasco; five-an'-forty days out; bound to Calcutta. Nae, I hae na seen your boat! An', mon, I can tell ye that there's nae mair cats aboard here nor there's mice to catch. I've only aught for'ard, a' told. Ye can count 'em for yoursel.'

And, truly, there were exactly eight bearded faces gaping at us, all in a row, over her rail.

'That's a gey queer story o' yours, mon,' he continued; 'an' if ye've nae objections, I'll just come aboard o' ye, an' hear it mair to

richts.' And I saw him cast another wondering glance at the *Hebe* as he spoke.

'You're welcome,' I replied shortly; and in a minute or two a gig with a couple of men and the speaker in her was pulled alongside the *Hebe*.

Coming up the light ladder I had thrown over, he gave a quick, rather suspicious glance around the decks, but made his best shore-bow as I introduced him to Helen. Presently the three of us went into the cabin, where, producing decanters and glasses, I told my story more fully, interrupted often by exclamations of astonishment in very broad Scotch—the broadest Aberdeen could produce, I think.

'Weel,' said he, 'I'll be keepin' a smairt lookoot for your boatie. I wish I could do mair; but ye'll ken yoursel'—nane better—that merchant-ships are na muckle ower-manned thae times; an' I'm afraid ye'll no be gettin' help unless it's frae ane o' they passenger steamers or a mon-o'-war. An' it'll mebbe a month afore ye sicht ane or ither o' 'em; but if the leddy' (with another bow to Helen) 'wad accept o' a passage to Calcutta, she's welcome, vera welcome, an' Peter Macalister o' Newburgh—that's me—will be the pleased mon to hae her. An,' he went on, turning to me, 'if ye like, Maister Vallance, ye can come wi' us. But, ye see, ye're a sailor-mon, an' can mak' shift weel aneuch wi' a soond ship an' twal months proveesions until help comes. Nor can the leddy's bein' awa frae ye mak' ony possible differ in the result, ae way or t'ither. An'—an'—weel, ye ken'—and the skipper suddenly stopped as if he had been shot, whilst Helen, divining what was coming, and what I never dreamt of, albeit my heart was in my boots, rose, her pale cheeks all aflame, and replied:

'Thank you very much, Captain Macalister, for your kind offer; but I could not think of leaving the *Hebe* as long as my friend, Mr Vallance, stays by her. Besides, would you advise me to desert my poor father's property when, perhaps, I may possibly be of use to Mr Vallance in helping him to save it?'

'Vera true, my dear young leddy,' replied the worthy skipper, getting redder than ever, but obviously impressed by the latter view of the case; 'it was just my ain bairns at hame that I was thinkin' on when I spoke, an' how I wadna muckle relish the notion o' ane o' them driftin' aboot the sea wi'— But there, there,' he broke off, feeling himself probably on perilous ground again, 'it's nae business o'

mine to interfere wi'. A' I can do is to keep a gude lookoot for the Major, an' that I will wi' pleasure. An' now I think on it, when we left Capetown they were expectin' Her Majesty's ship *Alexandra* in every day, a'most, frae the colonies—Australia, ye ken. If ye could but speak her ye'd be richt. Ye hae Greenwich time aboard, ye say. Weel, I'll stand by ye till noon, an' we can compare oor observations. An' i' the meantime, if ye like, I'll hae my men help us pit a reef in thae big tops'ls o' yours, an' snug yon foresail. Ye'll be a' the easier, gin it comes on a bit o' a blaw, ye ken.'

Thankfully accepting his kind offer, the four of us, reinforced by another two from the *Aurora*, put a single reef in each of the *Hebe's* topsails, and restowed the fore-course. By that time it was close on noon, and the captain, bidding us a hearty farewell, went aboard; and presently, discovering that our chronometers and position were exactly alike, he braced his yards up, dipped his ensign three times in token of farewell, whilst a hoarse roar of a cheer arose from the men in the barque's fore-rigging, as she stood across our stern with her port tacks aboard, and gradually faded away to a white speck on the horizon.

I think we felt lonely as we watched her, each probably fancying that perhaps it might be long before we saw again the faces of our kind or heard familiar speech.

'How glad I am you did not accept the captain's offer!' I remarked presently to Helen, as she left the wheel for a minute to give me a pull on a brace. 'I don't know what I should have done, all alone on the *Hebe*—gone mad, I expect.'

She blushed as her eyes met mine, and replied, smiling faintly, 'Captain Macalister evidently thought it would be the correct thing for me to do, and was within an ace of plainly saying so. You see, Mrs Grundy's influence extends even into the Indian Ocean. Perhaps the captain was right; but I could not bear the thought of leaving the *Hebe*. It seemed almost like an act of treachery to my poor father to desert her at the very first opportunity.'

This time, you will observe, there was nothing about me; but I was satisfied, nevertheless; possessing my soul in patience until the right place and moment should arrive, as arrive I felt, by now, they surely must.

Four days went by uneventfully, and I found

we were making southing rapidly, so much so that I reckoned another twenty-four hours would bring the *Hebe* well within the parallel of Cape Agulhas, and actually not many miles from the spot of ocean in which I had fallen overboard from the *Antelope*. During the nights our drift was inconsiderable, and always to the westward.

Since the *Aurora* left us there had been several heavy rain-squalls. To avoid these—although Helen wished me to come into the cabin—I had cleared out the deck-house forward, and in it on wet nights I pitched my camp. Lonely as it might be aft for the girl, I wished above all to refrain from anything that could bear the faintest resemblance to intrusion. And I think I did right; although Helen seemed just the least bit offended with me. However, the weather generally kept so fine that I was able to stay on deck aft most nights. Wet or dry I would have done so, but that, once coming up, and finding me there in the rain, she very decidedly expressed her intention of staying in it also, unless I either took shelter below with her or forward with Nan.

Although subject to intervals of brooding sadness, the girl had regained much of her cheery, hopeful nature, and used to keep me sweet and pleasant company whilst we sailed the brig, sometimes into the small hours. Then, when she went below, after giving me a hand to swing the yards, and I lay down for a brief rest with Nan at my feet, I would go over all our talk together, treasuring up every kind word, every deep and moving glance of my sweetheart's—for that such she was I more than hoped, although neither time nor place served to put the matter to the test. Of seeing the Major again I had quite given up all expectation. Helen, as she told me, had not another relative in the world. Clearly, at the very first opportunity I must marry her, and take her home to the vicarage. What should we do for a living? (I never in this connection thought of anything the Major might have left.) Well, there was a farm that I was to have worked, had I not chosen to seek a livelihood instead on 'these barren fields of wandering foam.' The lease would shortly be up, and I could resume it for myself and Helen; and it would be hard indeed if I couldn't knock some kind of a support out of it without having to come to the old people for help. What! Why, the cider alone from the big orchard at Birch Grove ought to keep us!

And so I dreamed, building my castles in the air. Romance! Why, air and ocean in these days were filled with the glamour of it—and of my new love!

We were very much together during this time. How could it be otherwise? And the more I saw of her the more I discovered what a fine character it was; what a noble soul and stainless mind gave grace and light and dignity to the beautiful being that I felt myself gradually gaining possession of.

But always—although in talking to you of her I have called her 'Helen'—it was, between us, Miss Fortescue and Mr Vallance. Most punctiliously did we keep up appearances; and if our eyes now and then spoke a language unmistakable, they were quickly lowered. Still, often, when her soft white hands met mine as we pulled on a rope together, and the breeze brushed a stray curl of hair across my cheek—often, I say, did I feel the need of self-control merge into a very torture of refraining from taking that graceful, yielding form into my arms and then and there declaring my love. But ever I fiercely fought against such temptation and beat my heart back into subjection, gaining the victory, looking at the last to my reward.

About this time it was that, being becalmed one evening, I sighted on our starboard beam a boat about three-quarters of a mile away. The *Hebe* herself was motionless, or nearly so; but the boat seemed drifting astern pretty quickly, probably in the set of some small current. In Helen's eyes, as she gazed, there was a perfect fever of sympathy and pity. And I could see that she yearned, as it were, to the sight of the helpless, tossing thing, and presently she spoke, almost to herself, but not so low as to prevent me catching her exclamation: 'If there should be any one sick and helpless—nigh dead in her!' And I knew by the sob she gave as she turned her eyes away that she was thinking of her father.

It was a mad thing for me to do, but I could not stand idly by and witness her distress, so I said: 'If you will help me to lower the dingey, I'll pull over and see if there is anybody in her.'

In a moment she jumped to the davit-falls; in another four or five I was pulling across the calm water. And then it seemed to suddenly dawn on her what a fatally foolish action her silent urging had led me into; and I saw her wave her hat, and heard her voice coming to

me in recall. But already I was half-way; and, determined to allow no room for after self-accusings or regrets, I kept steadily on until I was alongside the little derelict.

Looking over into her, I saw something that made me start back with fear and loathing; for there, prone in the bottom, lay four bodies, their features undistinguishable from decay; and, worse than all, scattered about there were terrible signs that, before their own deaths, they had been driven to the last dread resort of the castaway. But for these ghastly, mutilated fragments, there was not a thing in the boat with the corpses save her oars. Two of the men lay under the midship thwarts, nearly doubled up, as if their last moments had been spasms of agony; a third was right in the bows, eyeless from attacks of sea-birds—a shocking and a heart-rending spectacle—with features run together and discoloured until the face seemed a hideous putrid mask, mocking all semblance of humanity. The fourth corpse lay right aft on the grating, in much similar case to the other, only that in his hand he grasped a bare sheath-knife. All four, from their clothes, were men before the mast. There must, I could too easily see, have been others. Ugh! it was a gruesome sight; and giving the boat a shove off, I had slipped my oars to return, when, slueing to my push, she came round, stern towards me, and, to my unutterable horror, I read on it the words, '*Antelope*—London.'

I think, without using any extravagant figure of speech, I may say that, as my eyes caught the above inscription, my very soul shook within me at the new and terrible interest raised by it. But what could I do? There was the boat and its burden floating softly away! If I had possessed an axe, or any tool whatever fitted for the work, I would have pursued it, and driven a hole through its bottom, and let those rotting corpses sink to the depths below rather than wander the ocean in such terrific guise. But I had nothing; and the idea of groping for her plug beneath that festering mass repulsed my imagination to the verge of retching. And now glancing towards the *Hebe*, I noticed, with a thrill of alarm, how distant she appeared to be, looming indistinctly, a pale smudge, the very phantom of a ship, athwart a mist that was fast rising off the hot, oily water. Even as I stared there came to my ears the faint report of a gun, then another, and another, bearing something in the sound of them to my ears of quick impatience and distress.

Rapidly the smother thickened as, forgetting aught else, I pulled madly towards the noise of the shots—all the guide I had, for the brig was by this time invisible; and but for those dull echoes out of the mist I should have been quite bewildered—as likely as not making away from, in place of to, the *Hebe*. And how I blessed the presence of mind in my darling that had induced her to think of the only possible mode of indicating her whereabouts! Even when actually close alongside, almost hitting her, so thick was the fog, but for the report overhead I must have missed the vessel.

As I clambered on deck a dim figure came swiftly towards me, making with wide-open arms as if to embrace me; then all at once, with a quick cry, it seized both my hands, exclaiming: 'Oh, I thought I had lost you, and it nearly killed me!' Then, still holding my hands and laughing and sobbing hysterically, she led me aft, and brought food and drink to me, all the while, by turns, upbraiding herself for sending me on such an errand, and giving thanks to God for my safe return. And, secretly, it made me proud and happy to see such depths of emotion stirred for my sake in one usually so calm and self-possessed. But not until I found her, at last, soothed and tranquil would I tell her the result of my trip, and then not in full; although, I think, I need not have feared, had I so wished, seeing that for a time all things seemed swallowed up in deep thankfulness for my rescue and unharmed presence beside her.

But what of the *Antelope*? What awful misfortune could it be that had overtaken her, to send that ghastly boat-load of corpses to roam the sea unburied? Whatever it was, it must have been disaster, sudden and pitiless. For a moment it struck me as just possible that this very boat might have been lowered for me when I fell overboard, and that the ship had failed to pick her up. But on going back and thinking over the state of the weather at the time, I saw it was well-nigh incredible such a thing could happen. And surely I must have seen something of them next day! No, I felt certain in my own mind that the *Antelope* had come to grief in some terribly complete manner—a foreboding, as you will see later, fully realised.

A day or two after this incident, whilst at work in the galley, I heard Helen, at the wheel, cry out and point away on the port bow.

Jumping on to the fore-castle-head, I saw a vessel which, like the *Aurora*, had altered her

course to speak us. This one, however, had crept up during the night, unperceived until now. We still kept our distress-signal flying—not so much with the hope of speaking ships and borrowing men as to obtain information respecting the long-boat. Truth to tell, I think we were getting a little careless as regarded the keeping a strict lookout, especially after our experience with the *Aurora*. Evidently, to get the loan of men from any ordinary vessel was well-nigh hopeless; and, unaided, I began to think that our chances of arriving at Capetown, or anywhere else, were quite problematical, even if the weather held as fair as it had done for so long, which was quite too much to expect.

Within the last few days we had, too, struck an easterly current, and the *Hebe's* drift o' nights was pretty considerable. Clipper as she was, the brig, under her present canvas, was heavily handicapped. Nor, even with Helen for a relief at the wheel, could I sail her day and night. In fact, I never seriously attempted to do so.

From aloft I could now see the stranger plainly—a huge mass of canvas that at first it rather puzzled me to define, so bizarre did it look. But presently, as she swam more plainly into view, I made her out to be a four-masted barquentine, with enormously square fore-yards and towering main, mizzen, and jigger masts clothed in great stretches of fore and aft canvas, whilst from between them, and off her bowsprit and jib-boom, sprang regular flights of staysails and jibs—on the whole a very remarkable figure of a ship. I had, however, seen the rig before, mainly in timber-vessels hailing from Puget Sound or Vancouver, and had never felt any inclination to be shipmates with three forty-foot booms on a craft that a jib might shake all the sticks out of at once. As I watched her she luffed till all her widespread wings fluttered and shook like those of some monstrous sea-fowl preening itself; then, jibbing, she hoisted British colours and headed straight for the *Hebe*, although on the other tack she would have passed quite close enough to speak us.

Scanning the eastern horizon, I saw athwart the sky a faint stain of smoke, evidently from a steamer, but too far away to tell just yet in what direction she was travelling.

For the last couple of days we had been steering a south-west course, the wind allowing us to look up no higher; and that morning, for the first time, I had noticed such a marked fall in the barometer as set me seriously thinking of obtaining help to put an extra reef or two



in our topsails, and also get the dingey on board, for we had let it tow astern ever since my mad trip after the derelict boat. At the best ours was only higgledy-piggledy sort of navigation; and although far from tired of it in such company as my beautiful shipmate's, I would have been heartily pleased to see four or five strapping A.B.'s dumping down their round-bottomed bags in the *Hebe's* fore-castle, swarming up her ratlines, and putting all she could carry on her. However, the vessel and cargo I had by this time got to look upon as a kind of trust committed to my care for Helen and myself, and I was determined to take no risks. Help, I argued, must come at last, if only by means of vessels reporting me at their destination; and meanwhile I would do the best I could, without killing myself by unnecessary labour and worry. Truly, I had seen enough of ocean's awful work lately to make me careful; and that last experience! Why, even still, o' nights, I awoke wet with cold sweat, after dreaming that I was in the dingey, lashed alongside the other boat, with her dreadful, gruesome crew of dead and rotting men, whilst through the haze afar off came to me Helen's voice crying faintly and more faintly as we drifted away from each other.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A FIRST-CLASS CRUISER.



As the barquentine drew closer, she let go the sheets of her three fore and aft topsails, letting them hang to the crosstrees in great bunches of canvas. Then, squaring her fore-yards and hauling her tremendous booms amidships, she lay stationary, or nearly so, not a hundred yards away. Big and heavy as she was, her crew handled her like a top. Of fully 1200 tons burden, she was down the water aft, with a sheer in her from the elliptic stern to well forward of the fore-rigging, curving to a fine, free, gamecock-headed, graceful bow, which, added to her immensely lofty, raking masts and spreading breadths of canvas, gave her in some measure, to my eye, in spite of the red ensign streaming from her halyards, the air of a great bird of prey about to pounce on the naked, defenceless *Hebe*.

All at once, amidships on her decks, I caught sight of something that made my heart jump

half-way to my mouth. The object was the stern of a boat, with on it a large gilt rising sun—an emblem the memory of which I was not likely to forget.

I said nothing to Helen, who, having helped me to back our main-topsail, was now standing near me; but taking the glasses, tried to make the thing out more plainly. Yes, there was no doubt about the device; but then other boats besides *the* one might carry such a mark. And, owing to the deep shadow cast by the main-boom and part of the sail, I could observe only a portion of the stern; the rest lay almost in darkness.

The barquentine was strongly manned, for fully five-and-twenty faces peered at us over her bulwarks. And such faces were they that, as I glanced at them, I made up my mind at once, in this case at least, to forego my usual application for assistance. There was not a single white man amongst them—American negroes, Kanakas, Malays, and half-castes of varying grades of yellow, from that of a new saddle to the deeper tint of a roasted coffee-bean. No, no, I wanted no such cattle as those on board the *Hebe*!

On a small monkey-poop, but for which she was flush fore and aft, stood a group of three men, all whites, who devoured the *Hebe* with their eyes, staring aloft and around in a gaze that came always back and settled on Helen, and myself and Nan, who, as was her custom now when anything was to be seen, stood near us, her two fore-feet cocked up on the brig's rail, and by the expression of her knowing face, criticising the stranger with might and main.

'Hello!' shouted one of the men in response to my hail of 'Barquentine, ahoy!' 'What's the matter with the brig? Where's your crowd got to? And what do you want?'

The speaker was a tall, sunburned, not ill-looking man, with black moustache and whiskers, clad in a sack suit of gray tweed, wearing a Cape 'smasher' hat of soft felt, and puffing leisurely at a big cigar. He might have been an American or an Englishman from his speech; as a matter of fact, he was, as we learned later, an Afrikaner—father and mother Dutch—Algoa Bay born.

Very shortly I gave them the headlines of our story; asked the usual question about the boat; and explained that I'd be obliged for as much help as would shove another reef in, our topsails.

As I finished, the man, without giving me any answer, turned to the others; and the three conversed apparently with some little excitement, to judge from their animated gestures. Then the tall one shouted: 'No; I haven't seen any boat like the one you describe; but we'll keep a good lookout. Who did you say was in her when she went adrift?'

Now, I had not mentioned that any one at all was in her. And my eye wandering, whilst he spoke, over the barquentine, I noticed that the main-gaff had been quietly lowered until the sail completely hid the boat; and this rendered me more than ever suspicious that there was something wrong. However, I replied that it was just possible that Major Fortescue, the owner of the brig, might have been in the long-boat.

'You ain't sure about the matter, then, eh?' asked the tall man.

'Well, no,' I said; 'we can't be sure, as nobody saw him go overboard. Still, there's every chance he did manage to pick her up and get into her.'

At this they had another confab, two of them apparently urging the speaker to do something that went against his grain. As they spoke they pointed to the brig repeatedly. It was all very curious; and I would have given much for a clear view of her decks, beginning to suspect, as I did, that they had the boat, and were simply arguing as to the advisableness, or otherwise, of sticking to it.

The vessels had by this drifted another hundred yards away from each other; and I was keeping an eye to the group aft, when all at once a startled exclamation from Helen drew my attention to a scuffle on the forepart of the barquentine. Then in another moment I saw a man, clad in a suit of bright blue dungaree, shake himself clear of the crowd, knock a couple of them head over heels, and jumping on to the stranger's rail, plunge overboard and swim for the *Hebe*.

'Martin! Martin!' suddenly screamed Helen, grasping my arm with both hands, 'it's my father!'

For a second I was thrown all aback with disbelief, for I had not seen the man's face, so quickly had the occurrence taken place. And how Helen could be so sure of the thing bothered me. But she kept repeating, 'It's my father! my father!' with a very insistence of certainty that there was no resisting. Glancing at the head of the swimmer, bobbing up

and down in the little waves, my first notion was to jump for the dingey's painter, slip down it into the boat, and scull to the man's assistance. But just then I noticed the barquentine lowering her quarter boat, and by the shouts and commands, plainly audible at that short distance, I made out that, at all risks, the escaped one was to be captured and brought back again. So, pausing right at the taffrail, I bent another line to the one already fastened to the painter, and telling Helen to run below and bring up the big express rifle, I let the dingey drift down towards the swimmer, who, I could see, was going well and strong. And now that I had a good view of his face coming towards me, I saw that it really was the old Major himself.

The barquentine's gig was, with three hands in her, pulling for the man, who had already covered half the distance between the vessel and the *Hebe's* dingey, but who, of course, stood no show against such odds, and was being rapidly overhauled. Asking Helen to tend the line and keep veering it out, I caught up the rifle, and taking careful aim, so as to injure none of the men, I sent a bullet clean through the bottom of the pursuing boat, making the white chips fly where it struck.

At the sound of the report the men ceased rowing and stared about them in astonishment, one of the fellows dropping his oar overboard in his flurry. By this time I saw that the dingey had drifted almost on to the Major, and that, bar accidents, he was safe. I, however, stood by for another shot. But the men in the boat had evidently had enough. One fellow was trying to stop the leak with his cap, whilst the others pulled back to the barquentine. Satisfied, I turned to watch the Major, and presently saw him clutch the side of the dingey, drag himself over it, and fall into her bottom, whilst Helen and I pulled like mad people on our line till we got him alongside. Then in a jiffy I was into the boat, helped the Major thence into the chains, and so on deck. He was well enough, apparently; and although blown by his swim and panting with the excitement of the chase, he found strength and breath to shake his fist at the barquentine—now hurriedly making sail—and swear terribly at her, even with Helen's arms around his neck and her sweet face pressed close to his purple unshaven cheeks. And what a figure of a Major it was, with the thin, blue cotton suit, a world too short for him in all ways, clinging

tight to his dripping body; his thick gray hair and long moustaches all ruffled and unkempt; hatless, shirtless, bootless, glassless! All at once catching sight of the rifle, he made a grab at it, aimed, and pulled the trigger; but it was empty; and with a growl of disgust, he flung it down again.

Happening just at this moment to look forward, I saw something that made me shout with surprise and delight. There, on the star-board bow, not more than a mile away, and steaming straight for us, was a great ironclad cruiser all aglitter in the sunlight with polished steel and brass and winking eyes of glass, a big mound of white water rising on each side of her lofty stem, volumes of smoke pouring from her cream-coloured 'thwartship funnels, spiteful little guns peering over her military tops, and from her halyards—held straight out like a painted card by the wind of her speed—flew the red cross flag of the British navy: altogether a most majestic and convincing sea-picture.

As I gazed an inspiration came to me, and turning to where the Major stood, alternately raving at the barquentine and caressing his daughter, I touched him on the shoulder, saying: 'Look, Major! We shall have her alongside directly. Had you not better go below and dress to receive her officers? She'll fix those friends of yours up presently.'

Slueing round, he stared for a minute in a bewildered sort of manner at the war-ship, as though hardly able to believe his eyes. Then, with a comprehensive glance at himself, he bolted down the companion like a rabbit into a burrow, followed almost at once by Helen.

In twenty minutes the ironclad was close abreast of us, the wash from the enormous mass making the *Hebe* roll to it as if in a sea-way. And as I looked up at the grim gun-studded sides, the crowds of hearty, wholesome English faces gazing at us over her rail forward; her uniformed officers quietly pacing the quarter-deck; the scarlet-coated sentry, rifle on shoulder, doing his march to and fro the bridge before the conning-tower; listened to the short word of command, the shrill pipe of the boatswain, and the hoarse roar of his mate's leathern lungs—as I took all this in, I say, I felt my heart swell with such mingled feelings of pride of country and security of knowledge that at last our troubles were over, that scarcely could I find voice enough to answer the hail of the white-headed captain as he leaned over the bridge towards me.

Before, however, I had a chance to explain things very fully, up came the Major, spick-and-span once more even to his glass, such good time had he made below—so far at least as concerned his outward appearance. But his temper seemed very little improved, nor was his eye impressed by the spectacle of the sea-dragon and her great crowd of faces all with their regards bent on him. Catching sight of the captain, he shouted in a voice hoarse with passion, whilst Nan, in her usual position, chewed her cud contemplatively at his side: 'I appeal to you, sir, as a British officer, to stop that ship from escaping,' making a wild flourish of his arm towards the barquentine as he spoke. 'They're pirates, sir! They've stolen my boat, and my diamond links and studs—a present sir, from the Viceroy of India himself when I cut down the nigger who tried to stab him at Rawal Pindi. Why, damme! it's robbery—barefaced robbery on the high seas. Stop 'em, sir! And if they won't stop, sink 'em! Why, by gad, sir, they put me in the fok'sle with a lot of infernal niggers, and made me—me—John Fortescue—after holding Her Most Gracious Majesty's commission for twenty years—wash their blasted plates and dishes for 'em!'

At this I saw a great, wide, silent grin ripple across the Jacks' faces forward, like the sudden wash of a short sea over a moored buoy. But aft no one so much as smiled. And suddenly it struck me that amongst those brown and bearded figures crowding the forward deck were one or two who—as they made curious grimaces, slapped their bare and mossy chests, and, as it were, itched all over to attract my attention without trenching on discipline—seemed wonderfully familiar. But before I could place them in my memory the captain of the cruiser spoke. 'Be sure, sir,' he replied courteously, 'that you shall have every satisfaction, as soon as I learn your story. Meanwhile we will signal the barquentine to heave-to;' and turning, he said something to another officer beside him.

In a minute a boat full of men dropped into the water, whilst a string of bright flags fluttered up the warship's halyards; in another two or three it was alongside, and there clambered on board the *Hebe* a young lieutenant—a typical British navy man, clean-shaven, bright-eyed, alert.

Stepping aft, he saluted us, saying: 'Captain Murray's compliments, gentlemen, and will you both come on board Her Majesty's ship *Alexandra*?'

As he spoke Helen rose through the companion beside him, radiant and smiling, her soft brown eyes sparkling with joy and affection. And though palpably astonished at the lovely apparition, the young fellow rose to the occasion, as the Major introduced him, and said something nice about such an unexpected honour and pleasure; adding that, as his instructions were to presently return and hold the brig until things were settled, Helen had better accompany us to the *Alexandra*. At that moment there was a loud report from the cruiser, and a long curl of smoke went eddying from her side.

'Ah!' exclaimed the lieutenant, 'the barquentine won't pay any attention to our signals apparently. That will help her to understand what we want. Have you a gangway for the lady, sir?' he asked. 'If you have, my men shall soon put it over.'

There was one lashed on the forward house, a very comfortable one; and at a word some of the men tumbled up and had it over the side, themselves remaining to see that the brig didn't run away during our absence. Then, offering his arm to Helen, he helped her down the steps with a grace and ease and skill born, I doubted not, of long and constant practice at Sydney, Auckland, Hobart, and other stations whose fair ones love everything able to sport the sign of the crown and the foul anchor, from the captain to the last-joined midshipman, with an energy and thoroughness that make those ports, *par excellence*, the happy hunting grounds of the service.

The Major—still grumbling, but in a lower, quieter note now that the first blow-off of angry steam had escaped—and myself followed; and the boat was about to push off, when Nan, thinking we meant to desert her, gave a dismal bleat and clattered down the steps, landing neatly on the knees of one of the Jacks.

'Let her come!' said the Major to the lieutenant. 'Let her come! You'll have the whole of the *Hebe's* crew together then.'

The lieutenant sat next Helen, and was evidently making the most of the short time at his disposal. But you mustn't think that I was the least bit jealous of his good-looking face and spruce uniform. Not I! Too often had I seen the love-light in my girl's eyes for that; and even now I caught a look in them, as they momentarily met mine, that assured me of my being able to laugh to scorn the wiles of the whole British navy if necessary.

On the quarter-deck of the *Alexandra* we were met by the captain himself, who conducted us to his private cabin, whence, presently, we could hear the thumping of the twin screws as the war-ship forged ahead again. Refreshments were placed on the table; and, by the captain's wish, I began our story, telling it shortly and with few details, to the time of the Major's leaving us, when he took it up.

His tumble had happened, it appeared, exactly as I guessed. In the very act of unbending the painter, overbalancing himself, down he went. He shouted on coming to the surface, but, of course, in vain. Then, giving up all hopes of regaining the brig, he swam after the boat, already some considerable distance away, and at last reached her, but too exhausted to do anything more even if he had known how. When daylight broke he could see nothing of the *Hebe*. She must have been, he thought, sailing for some time after he fell overboard, for then there was no sign of any squall rising. Nor did he ever once hear the report of a gun. But in any case, without his glass, even by day, he would probably have been unable to discern the brig at a distance.

Quite ignorant of how to manage the cutter, he appeared to have sailed erratically hither and thither until picked up by the barquentine. And then, to his rage and disgust, the captain, affecting altogether to disbelieve his story, and remarking that he was probably an escaped convict from the Andamans or some other penal settlement, confiscated his boat, jewellery, and clothes—which latter he had taken off and dried, putting on instead one of the dungaree suits left by the mutineers—and sent him forward into the forecabin. But there—and the old Major turned a rich purple, whilst every hair in his moustache visibly quivered and bristled with rage as he told it—the men, finding him useless for practical purposes, made a 'Jimmy Ducks' of him, forcing him to scrub, wash up, sweep decks, and generally wait on them. At first he had indignantly refused; but after the 'niggers' had manhandled him pretty severely, and, as one might guess, put him in actual fear for his life, he had thought it best to submit, until at last came the chance of escape from the *Oceana Smith*, late of Vancouver, B.C., but now the property of a Dutch-English firm in Capetown.

'From beginning to end of both your experiences, interest and romance run each other close,' remarked the captain as the old gentle-



man finished; 'and I can, in one detail, cap yours, Mr Vallance, with regard to the *Antelope*. About half-way between here and Cape Leeuwin we picked up one of her boats with Captain Craigie and three seamen in her, all nearly spent. Originally there had been ten in her. These were the survivors. And I am afraid, after what you tell us about the other boat, that the four with us are the only ones who have escaped out of the whole ship's company. The *Antelope* caught fire, the flames spreading so rapidly that any preparations as regards provisions, &c., were out of the question. All that could be done was to pull clear of her as soon as possible. A terribly sad and sudden affair! The men recovered, and have joined the *Alexandra*; but their captain is still under the doctor's care. Now shall we go on deck and see what Major Fortescue's friends are doing? I think,' continued the fine, hearty-looking old officer as he offered his arm to Helen, 'that I heard my first lieutenant say our shot seemed to have done what our flags could not.'

Nearly a mile away lay the *Oceana Smith*, her three after-masts naked but for the topsails hanging in lumps at their heads; her foresail, fore-topgallant-sail, and royal were all clewed up; topsail-yard on the cap—everything about her betokening surrender, unconditional and complete. At quarter speed only the *Alexandra* steamed alongside and hailed. The same tall, dark-whiskered fellow (pointed out by the Major as her captain) replied, staring hard at his late captive standing near the first lieutenant.

'Come on board, sir,' said the latter when his question relating to the barquentine's name and port had been answered, 'and bring this gentleman's property with you; also your ship's papers.'

'I'm a British subject' (his name was Van Beers), replied the other sulkily, without stirring; 'and I'll see what Hofmeyr and a few of them have to say in the House about my being shot at, first by him' (pointing at me), 'and then by you, in this free-and-easy fashion.'

'Come on board, sir, at once,' repeated the lieutenant sternly. 'Or do you wish me to send a file of marines for you?'

Seeing that there was no help for it, the other got into his gig, and in a few minutes was conducted by a sub-lieutenant to us on the quarter-deck, carrying with him the Major's clothes and fallals all intact.

During the sort of informal court-martial

D

now held upon him by the captain and two of his lieutenants, the fellow protested, notwithstanding the indignant snorts of the angry Major, his belief that, when he picked him up, the latter was no better than an escaped convict who had stolen both boat and jewellery. If, he argued, making a decided point, there had been any ship's name, even, on the boat, he might have believed the story. But what with the quantity of provisions in her, the traces of occupation by several men, and the improbability of any vessel carrying such a craft upon her decks as asserted by the Major, why, he acted, he submitted, as most captains would have done in his place. As it was, his quarter-boat had been ruined by a shot from the brig; his voyage delayed by the action of the cruiser; and, taking things all round, he hoped, when he got back to Capetown, to receive thumping damages against both the owner of the brig and the government. And actually, when things came to be dissected coolly, it seemed, somehow, that Captain Van Beers' defence was not wholly without reason, nor his threats without possible foundation; nay, that, in one way of putting it, he held the big end of the stick. Captain Murray evidently thought so; for, after an aside with the Major and another with Van Beers, the latter came forward and apologised handsomely to the Major for his most unfortunate mistake. And when the Major, accepting his excuses, asked the captain to keep the cutter as some return, not only for picking him up, but for the injury sustained by the *Oceana's* quarter-boat, I think every one felt relieved.

'A very palpable scamp!' remarked Captain Murray as we watched the 'British subject' pulling off to his ship. 'And if we had not come up, Major, you'd have lost both boat and diamonds. I have heard of his firm as being anything but particular. The chances are he would have seized the brig and claimed salvage but for us. How quickly he took to his heels! You see, Major, it's only in sea-novels that the British navy man romps over the merchantman's decks and bullies him half out of his life. If that fellow had not been placated, very probably some Capetown attorney would have presently given H.M.S. *Alexandra* more trouble than enough; ay, and quite likely they'd have brought an action against our young friend here and yourself, as responsible owner of the brig, for an unprovoked and murderous attack on a boat's crew. Really, the affair has ended in the best way it could.'

The Major acquiesced, not very cheerfully, though. He badly wanted to teach those 'confounded niggers' manners. And he never, to his dying day, forgot the indignities put upon him in the *Oceana's* fore-castle; always, when spinning the yarn in after-days, omitting any mention of the scrubbing and plate-washing.

'I think, Major,' said the commander of the war-ship as we steamed back to the *Hebe*, 'that we are going to have some heavy weather, or I wouldn't mind giving the brig a tow for a day or two. But if I put five hands and a bo'n's mate aboard of her under Mr Vallance here, as skipper, that number should be ample to take her to Capetown. Of course, you and Miss Fortescue must be my guests as far as there, at any rate. Both of you have had quite enough of adventures for a spell, I am sure.—I am sorry to say, Mr Vallance,' he continued after the Major had thankfully accepted the invitation, 'that Captain Craigie is still too low to see any one. He, however, sends his regards, and says how rejoiced he is to hear of your safety, and that he hopes to meet you at the Cape.'

This was all very well; but the losing of Helen's company was somewhat of a facer. However, what could I do except acquiesce with as good a grace as possible! Also, had she not called me 'Martin' twice! And when at last, the luggage having been put into the man-o'-war's boat, and the time came for saying farewell, had she not said, her hand close grasped in mine: 'Come to us quickly. I shall feel each day a month until I see the *Hebe* again. Although you are losing your shipmate, do not believe but that she will hold you fast in her memory!'

I had something particular to say in reply; but just then the Major's voice broke in upon us with, 'Now then, Vallance, my boy, time's up! A fast and pleasant trip to ye. Don't call me a deserter; but I've had enough of the *Hebe*. We'll sell her at the Cape, and all go home together. Gad, sir, no more sea! I'll buy a farm first!' And so on, and so on, until he was in the boat. Still, I was very well satisfied; for even his parting words sounded not without promise as regarded the future.

Thus it was in good spirits that I mustered my new crew—and yet not all new, for the three 'Antelopes' made part of it—and roused them round with a 'Cheerily, lads! let's shove the canvas on her—everything she can carry! Those kites up there are getting blue-mouldy for want of loosing!'

With a rush to the sound of my voice they jumped into her rigging, cast adrift, sheeted home, and hoisted, till, under every rag she had, the *Hebe* lay over to a light breeze as she had not done since I knew her.

The cruiser had stood by us. And now, after watching our start, her great screws began to thrash the water into foam once more; once more the bow wave rolled up till its salt spray wetted the royal arms blazoned in blue and gold at her head; the red cross flag dipped; the Major and his daughter, standing on the lower bridge, waved to us; from somewhere in her vast interior a band struck up 'Home, Sweet Home;' and my eyes grew a little dim as I hauled our ensign down for the last time, and the big battle-ship drew majestically ahead after playing her part, to us, of an ocean Providence.

Nan stood with her feet on the rail chewing her cud serenely; and to add some slight favour of the comic to it all, the burly, bearded 'Antelope' at the wheel, pointing with great forefinger to the goat, grinned, and said: 'Her looks Al, Mr Vallance, sir. It were me as give the ole gal a free passidge; an', by what I hears, I never done a better night's work.'

'No, Johnson, you never did,' I replied. 'I'm in your debt, and won't forget it; although, remember, it wasn't altogether for my sake you gave Nan a roving commission.'

I don't think, dear reader, that I have very much more to tell you; and if I wind up in the orthodox fashion—getting old-fashioned now for a story of to-day—it's because I see no way, even did I so desire, of escaping such ending. I am not altogether a convert to the new style of story beginning abruptly with 'Smith was sick,' and ending quite as abruptly with 'Smith died.' Therefore, I shall work this one out right to the pealing of those wedding-bells with the sound of which finished my last voyage as a sailor.

At Capetown we found Helen and her father, together with my old skipper, all staying at the house of a hospitable friend of the Major's (the same to whom Tippoo had been on his way when fate overtook him). Our adventures had naturally got noised abroad somewhat; and when we made our number to Green Point, our entering into the harbour was a sort of triumphant procession of small boats and steamers.

Happening, as we luckily did, to hit an empty

market, the *Hebe's* cargo sold very well. And the brig brought more than the Major gave for her; thus I found the old gentleman in the best of tempers. Nor, in all ways, ever did course of true love run smoother than mine and Helen's. The Major, after satisfying himself respecting that little matter of kinship with the Somersetshire Vallances, gave his consent at once. Helen's I won one moonlit night, under a clump of pink and white oleanders in our host's garden, finding that I had made no mistake, and that her heart had long been mine. All I had to press for was an early day. And we were married at old St George's the very next day, all Capetown coming to the wedding, together with the captain and officers of H.M.S. *Alexandra*. Captain Craigie acted as my best man—weak still, for their privations in the boat had been awful. 'Vallance,' said he as we parted, 'I shall never forget your kindness.' (I had been, curiously enough, through influence exercised by one of those other Vallances, then resident at Port Elizabeth, instrumental in procuring the captain a billet in the South African 'Harbours and Rivers.') 'But give the sea best, my lad. It's used you well on the whole. Don't tempt it any more. It's not to be trusted; see how it's served me!'

I don't know whether Nan can be reckoned as a bridesmaid, or rather matron; but certainly she was present at the ceremony. And besides wearing a silver collar, a present from the Major, some of the Capetown lasses had taken her in hand and gilded her horns from truck to keelson, making a very gorgeous goat of her.

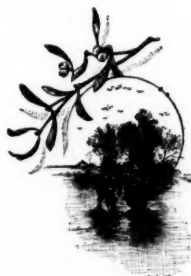
The Major's gift to us was a cheque on the Standard Bank of South Africa for the whole

value of the brig and her cargo, running into four figures whose initial number exceeded 'one'!

And taking Captain Craigie's advice, my own notions tending that way, to say nothing of Helen's, I gave up the sea. For a twelvemonth we stayed at Compton-on-Tor with the old folk. Then the Major, buying a great turreted, straggling place that he called the 'Bungalow,' at Combe Moham, facing Torbay, would have us go live with him and make his home ours. He is still hale and hearty, and spends much of his time at a certain club over in Torquay affected by the old Anglo-Indians who abound in that beautiful health-resort; and there, amongst these companions, he spins his tales of the Mutiny and the incident of saving the Viceroy's life. But the favourite with his military hearers is the story of his cruise in the *Hebe*, which, by dint of time, much embroidery, and frequent tellings, has assumed dimensions and aspect unrecognisable by any of the other actors therein. Nan, too, is well and thriving, demeaning herself as a goat with a history should do; looked up to by the Bungalow dogs, whom she keeps in order, and greatly respected by the domestic animals of Combe Moham.

And o' nights, sometimes, I lie awake and listen to the sea calling at the foot of the tall red cliffs, feeling a faint thrill of the wild longing that ever, now and again, comes to the land-dweller whose way aforetime has been upon the great deep. But at such moments I turn to Helen, lying at my side, or put my hand down towards the cot of my year-old son. And the sea calls still!

But not for me, not for me! I have made my last voyage.



**CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL for JANUARY—FIRST PART of NEW VOLUME.**

---

**Ready on 21st December**

**THE FIRST PART OF . . .**

---

**Price 7d.**



---

***Chambers's Journal***  
**. . for 1898 . .**

---

In which will be published the Opening Chapters of a New Novel of powerful and romantic interest, entitled

**‘JOHN BURNET of BARN.’**

**By JOHN BUCHAN.**

This is a story of Upper Tweedside and Clydesdale in the later years of the Seventeenth Century. The chief character is a young Scotch gentleman and a scholar, who is accidentally compelled to take refuge among the Covenanters on the hills. The story contains abundance of incident, and may be expected to give its author a high place amongst the best modern writers of tales of romantic adventure.

---

The Part will also contain stories by GUY BOOTHBY and other well-known writers of fiction, besides many articles dealing with modern science and subjects of general and current interest.

---

***Monthly, price 7d. and 8d., from all Booksellers.***

---

**W. & R. CHAMBERS, LIMITED,**  
**47 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON; AND EDINBURGH.**



